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The MIND Diet

**Mediterranean + DASH Diets
to Benefit Your Brain**

Delicious Foods for Cognitive Health

Key Lifestyle Habits

Deter Dementia at Any Age

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SPECIAL **EatingWell** EDITION

The MIND Diet

Mediterranean + DASH Diets to Benefit Your Brain



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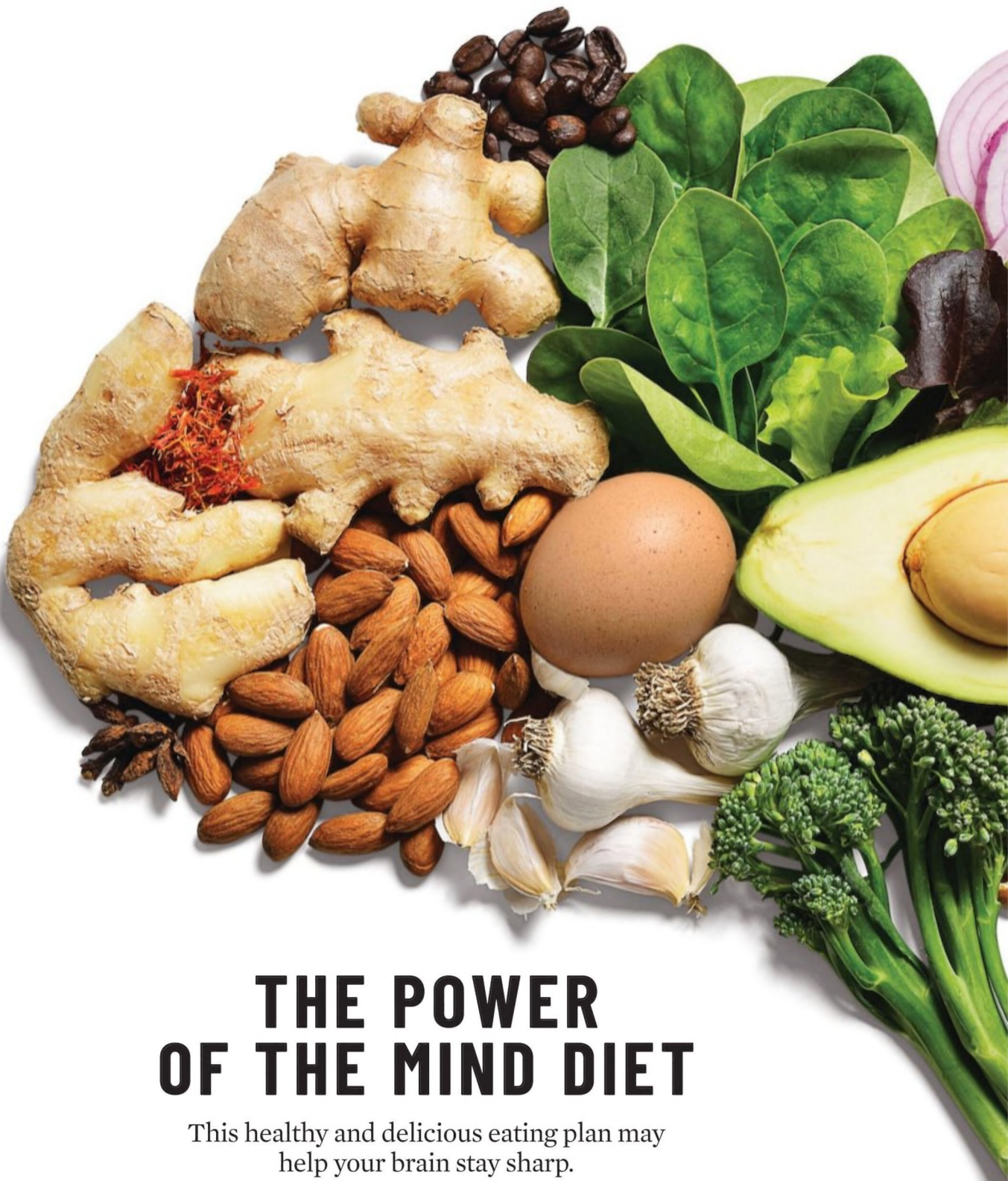
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Parts of this special edition were previously published.

This book is for general information purposes only, and nothing contained in it is intended to substitute for individualized advice from a physician or other health professional. The reader should consult the appropriate health professional in matters relating to physical and mental health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or treatment.

On the cover: Chicken-Quinoa
Bowl with Strawberries & Pecans
at eatingwell.com/quinoabowl



THE POWER OF THE MIND DIET

This healthy and delicious eating plan may
help your brain stay sharp.

BY KAREN ANSEL, M.S., RDN

Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia



Everyone forgets where they put their phone sometimes. But when memory lapses become a regular event, you might start to wonder if there's something more serious going on. And with good reason. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 9 American adults are living with subjective cognitive decline (SCD), a condition marked by persistent confusion and memory lapses that are among the first warning signs of dementia. SCD is also a precursor to Alzheimer's disease, the seventh leading cause of death in the United States. Yet as widespread as these conditions are, only 4 in 10 Americans promptly reach out to their doctor when they experience memory issues.

"The good news is, 40 percent of dementia is believed to be preventable," says Nathaniel Chin, M.D., medical director and core coleader of the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. "In addition to managing risk factors like heart disease, diabetes, depression and physical inactivity, the foods we eat are very much connected to that risk."

Even if dementia isn't on your mind right now, there are other important reasons to eat for brain health. Emerging research reveals that diet may have implications for other brain-related conditions, such as depression, anxiety and long COVID, which has been linked to long-term cognitive troubles, mood issues and fatigue.

Of course, you may not be able to control every risk factor for cognitive decline, such as your age, family history or genetics. However, the latest research reveals several eating patterns that can foster better brain aging. The most studied—and promising—is the MIND diet.

Understanding Cognitive Change

The terms cognitive impairment, cognitive decline, dementia and Alzheimer's are often used interchangeably, but they're not the same thing. While they all fall under the bigger umbrella of cognitive change, they exist on a spectrum. For instance, forgetting why you walked into a room or what you were about to say is annoying. Yet it's often a natural part of the aging process, and some changes will happen to all of us eventually if we live long enough, Chin says. Mild cognitive impairment is

characterized by forgetfulness and memory lapses that go beyond normal age-related changes, but they aren't serious enough to interfere with a person's day-to-day functioning. "However, when those changes become so severe that you can no longer do your taxes, manage your medications or drive, this crosses into the dementia phase," says Chin. "Several brain diseases fall into this sphere, including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, Lewy body dementia and frontal temporal disease." So while you don't have to have Alzheimer's to have dementia, Alzheimer's is a type of dementia.

The Link Between Diet and Brain Health

"The brain is an incredibly hungry organ," says Maggie Moon, M.S., RD, author of *The MIND Diet*. "Even though the brain only makes up 2 percent of our body weight, it consumes 20 percent of our calories." Because the heart pumps roughly a quarter of the body's blood to the head, the brain is also highly reliant on the heart's health for its own function, notes Moon.

To help your brain stay healthy and agile, a heart-friendly diet that's low in saturated fat and sodium is a solid start. But the brain needs other nutrients, especially healthy fats, which you'll read more about on page 10. This ravenous organ also requires B vitamins for cell development, iron to carry oxygen to neurons, and antioxidants to protect against inflammation and oxidative stress. Vitamin D is also a key player, believed to help clear away beta-amyloid plaques, which can destroy brain cells.

While it's tempting to zero in on a few magical "brain-boosting foods," experts believe a person's overall eating pattern is a far more powerful strategy for delivering the wide array of nutrients needed for optimal cognitive health today and to stay sharp down the road.

And there's more than one plan that can work. In addition to the MIND diet, the Mediterranean diet, the DASH diet, the Nordic diet and even calorie restriction have all been linked to better long-term cognitive health.

The MIND Diet at Work

Of all the eating patterns studied for cognitive protection, the MIND diet has the most research

behind it. The plan was initially created by doctors at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago. Intrigued by promising research regarding the Mediterranean and DASH diets' ability to stave off dementia, Rush researchers were curious to see if combining the key features of those eating patterns could deliver even more brain-protecting power. In 2015, they created the MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Diet Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diet. The plan focused on 10 brain-friendly food categories, especially vegetables (leafy greens in particular), berries, whole grains, nuts, olive oil and small amounts of poultry and fish, while limiting foods high in saturated fats, trans fats and added sugars: butter and margarine, cheese, red meat, fried food, pastries and sweets.

Next, the researchers recruited older adults without dementia, giving them cognitive tests and asking more than 140 questions about their diet. For an average of five years, the team repeated the diet questionnaire annually and followed 960 volunteers to monitor their cognitive health.

At the end of the study, the researchers observed that the volunteers with the highest MIND diet scores had brains with the cognitive abilities of a person 7½ years younger than those with the lowest scores. They also found that people whose diet closely mirrored the MIND pattern were 53 percent less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. But that wasn't all. "Even people who only adhered moderately reduced their odds by 35 percent—so you don't have to follow the plan to the letter to see big benefits," says Moon.

What Makes MIND So Effective?

"For starters, the plan is largely plant-based, meaning that plants are the foundation of the diet," says Paul Jacques, D.Sc., senior scientist of the Nutritional Epidemiology Team at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University. "So it delivers a potent combination of nutrients that have been shown to promote brain health." However, certain plant foods are believed to be especially beneficial. "Of these, arguably the most effective are berries and green leafy vegetables," says Auriel A. Willette, M.S., Ph.D., associate professor at the Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research in the Department



of Neurology at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. Any kind of berry is a win, as they contain large amounts of polyphenols, potent antioxidants that protect against damage to parts of the brain responsible for producing energy, Willette adds. And eating slightly more than one daily serving of leafy greens may help turn back the cognitive clock by as much as 11 years, thanks to a protective cocktail of nitrates, folate, lutein and vitamin E, per 2018 research in the journal *Neurology*.

What you limit matters, too, starting with red meat and butter. “MIND was designed to limit excessive consumption of saturated fat,” which can lead to blood-brain barrier dysfunction that causes cognitive decline, as well as formation of beta-amyloid plaques, says Moon. Fried foods are also limited, as high-heat frying leads to the formation of compounds called advanced glycation endpoints, which can damage brain cells, Willette explains.

You can also expect to curb sweets. “[Excessive] added sugars not only add up to lots of extra calories, they also bump up insulin and keep it elevated for a while,” Willette says. “Over time, this can overwork cells in your pancreas called beta islet cells, eventually leading to prediabetes or type 2 diabetes.” Because brain cells are exquisitely sensitive to

insulin resistance, this may cause neurons to deteriorate, accelerating brain aging. “Insulin resistance is so important that some studies refer to Alzheimer’s as type 3 diabetes,” adds Jacques.

The Bigger Picture

MIND diet research shows no signs of slowing down. Most recently, a 2023 *JAMA Psychiatry* study found that middle-aged and older adults whose diets most closely resembled the MIND plan were 17 percent less likely to develop dementia than people with low MIND scores. Additionally, a 2023 Rush University Medical Center Study of the brains of people who donated their bodies to science found that those who had followed a MIND-type diet had fewer Alzheimer’s-related amyloid brain plaques.

As encouraging as the research is, the existing body of MIND research is based on association, not causation, Chin explains. That means there’s an observed link between eating habits and cognitive health. There’s still no proof that diet caused or directly protected against dementia. “Yes, diet is important, but so are exercise, restorative sleep, mental stimulation, social engagement and stress reduction,” he says. “In the end, we have to look at brain health holistically.” ●

A person wearing a red apron over a blue shirt is peeling a carrot with a vegetable peeler. The scene is set in a kitchen with a wooden countertop. On the counter, there are several fresh vegetables: a whole red tomato, a head of garlic, and several mushrooms. A glass bottle of olive oil is visible on the left. The background is slightly blurred, showing a tiled wall and a red bowl.

Chapter 1

EATING FOR BRAIN HEALTH

Certain foods and eating habits offer powerful benefits and may lower the risk of dementia as well as help stave off cognitive decline.



THE BEST FOODS

Eating these healthy foods on the MIND diet can help reduce your risk of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia.

BY MELINDA WENNER MOYER AND
ANDREA MATHIS, M.A., RDN, LD

Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

As you get older, keeping your brain healthy becomes top of mind (pun intended). One out of every nine Americans over the age of 65 have Alzheimer's dementia, and another 17 percent have mild cognitive impairment, according to the Alzheimer's Association. Though aging may contribute to the development of dementia, lifestyle factors can reduce or increase your level of risk. Eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise support brain health.

The brain is a very important organ. It's the control center of your body and allows you to move, think, feel, breathe and more. Because the brain has such a big job, it's imperative to provide it with an abundance of fuel and nutrients to help it function properly and stay healthy.

What we eat plays a huge role in the structure and health of the brain. A 2019 study published in *Public Health Nutrition* showed that foods rich

in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, flavanols, polyphenols and omega-3 fatty acids can help protect the brain. They can help improve memory, concentration and overall brain health.

The MIND diet focuses specifically on foods that can help your brain and reduce your risk of Alzheimer's and other types of dementia. Here are some of the key foods associated with better brain function and lower risk of Alzheimer's disease. All are rich in compounds that have been shown to protect and nourish the brain.

Whole Grains

Whole grains are a cornerstone of a healthy eating pattern. They can help reduce your risk of heart disease, manage diabetes, promote weight loss and protect your brain, too. Plus, whole grains come in many shapes and forms, making them a super versatile option.

Brown rice, oats and other whole grains have magnesium, which helps brain cells use energy.





Spaghetti with Creamy
Lemon-Spinach Sauce
at eatingwell.com/spaghetti



Leafy Greens

It might not be too surprising that nutrient-dense leafy greens including kale, spinach, collards and chard are packed with health benefits. When it comes to brain health, they are a must-have. Greens contain antioxidants including beta carotene and folate, and they are also rich in vitamin K. Observational studies suggest that higher levels of vitamin K in the blood are associated with better cognitive function.

Increasing your intake of leafy greens doesn't have to be hard. You can try adding a handful of greens when preparing a smoothie or adding a serving of greens to your favorite casserole recipe.

Berries

Not only are berries delicious, but they are also rich in compounds that protect the brain, including antioxidants. Eating them on a regular basis can reduce inflammation and strengthen connections between neurons (brain cells) to make it easier for them to communicate with each other.

While all berries are beneficial for brain health, blueberries are at the top of the list. They contribute essential nutrients to the body, including vitamin C, vitamin K, manganese and phytonutrients. These nutrients help to stimulate the flow of blood and oxygen in the brain, resulting in improved concentration.

A 2019 study published in *Public Health Nutrition* suggests that eating a diet containing a variety of vegetables and fruits, such as blueberries, is associated with a lower risk of age-related cognitive impairment, dementia and Alzheimer's disease. There are many ways to enjoy this tasty fruit (or your favorite berry)—try adding a handful to your smoothie recipe or pureeing some berries to make a delicious blueberry chia jam.

Nuts

Nuts like almonds are perfect as a fiber-rich, filling snack that helps keep hunger at bay. They also boast some impressive health benefits. Almonds, for example, are high in vitamin E, an antioxidant that deactivates the damaging free radicals that surround brain cells.

When compared with other nuts, walnuts offer twice as much alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), a potent antioxidant. This nutrient is a plant-based omega-3 essential fatty acid that helps counteract cognitive decline by suppressing inflammation and oxidative stress. These two factors have been linked to Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

A 2020 study published in *Nutrients* suggests that eating 1 to 2 ounces of walnuts per day can improve cognitive function. Try adding a serving of walnuts to a hearty salad or pairing them with a variety of roasted vegetables.

Vegetables

The 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend 2½ cups of vegetables per day on a 2,000-calorie eating plan. The MIND diet also places high value on eating your veggies for good reason. Vegetables are full of vitamins, including folate. A 2021 *Frontiers in Neuroscience* review





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concluded that a folate deficiency increased the risk for Alzheimer's disease, and that adequate folate intake protects against the condition.

A 2023 *Nutrients* study found that older adults who frequently consumed both fruits and vegetables experienced a reduction in mild cognitive impairment compared with people who ate fruits and vegetables infrequently.

Think of small ways you can add more vegetables to your meals, such as mixing spinach into your eggs and loading your sandwiches with avocado and cucumber.

Beans

Many beans, including chickpeas, navy beans and pinto beans, supply magnesium, folate and plant protein. Beans, including canned ones, contain fiber to help control blood glucose levels, which when elevated damage brain cells. Try mashing some drained canned chickpeas into a spread for sandwiches, or sauté some white beans with kale and double up on MIND diet goodness.

Fish

Fish is an excellent source of protein that the body uses to make neurotransmitters, which are compounds that allow brain cells to communicate with each other. Salmon is commonly known as a great source of protein, but did you know that it is also great for brain health? Fatty fish like salmon, sardines and tuna are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which are critical for brain development and function. In addition to improving brain health, these fatty acids have been associated with lowering the risk of heart disease and arthritis.

Fish, of course, can be prepared in a variety of ways. It can be seared and paired with a hearty serving of vegetables or added to your favorite pasta dish.

Poultry

Poultry is rich in choline, a B vitamin that is important for brain development during pregnancy and breastfeeding and for brain function later in life. A 2022 *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* study found that low choline consumption was related to a greater risk for Alzheimer's and other dementia.

Healthy Oil

Plant-based oils are a central part of the MIND diet, and the health benefits extend to the brain. Extra-virgin olive oil is rich in oleocanthal, a compound that calms the inflammatory enzymes COX-1 and COX-2.

A 2022 study published in the journal *Nutrients* suggested that older adults who regularly consumed olive oil had a lower chance of developing Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias. Canola, avocado, peanut, sesame and sunflower oils are all good sources of unsaturated fat (as opposed to saturated and trans fats, which in excess can be detrimental to heart health). ●





Grilled Salmon &
Vegetables with Charred
Lemon-Garlic Vinaigrette
at eatingwell.com/lemonsalmon

OMEGA-3: A POWERHOUSE NUTRIENT

Omega-3 fatty acids may help improve your brain health.

BY ELIZABETH SHAW, M.S., RDN, CPT
Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

A

re you looking for ways to stay sharp as you get older? Maybe you've watched a loved one struggle with cognitive decline and want to avoid that. Or perhaps you simply want to be proactive for your own health overall.

No matter what the reason, we see you.

The good news is you might already be taking steps to your brain health. According to a 2019 study in the *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry*, a daily dose of word puzzles may keep your brain engaged and challenged, which can help with cognition. So you don't need to worry that you're wasting your time with them.

And if you're not already, there's another factor you may want to prioritize in your regular routine: omega-3 fatty acids. Here's everything you need to know about omega-3s and brain health as you age.

Omega-3 fatty acids are polyunsaturated fats found in three forms: alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA). You need to consume these fats in your diet, as your body cannot make them in sufficient quantities on its own. Thankfully, seafood sources such as salmon, tuna, shrimp, fish oil and krill oil contain the omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, while plant-based sources like walnuts, flaxseed and chia seeds contain ALA.

Omega-3 fatty acids have shown promise in multiple areas of wellness, which is why they continue to receive the spotlight. From promoting heart health to reducing inflammation, supporting mental health, improving cognition and more, the benefits of these necessary fats are far-reaching.

Supporting Brain Health

According to a 2020 study published in the *Social Science & Medicine Journal of Population Health*, 2 out of 3 Americans will experience some cognitive decline by age 70. Given the benefits omega-3s have shown so far regarding cognitive health, researchers are beginning to delve further into the effects these fats may have on the aging brain.

Before we dive into the science, here's a biology refresher. The omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA are critical components of cell membranes—meaning

they play an important role in keeping the brain functioning and facilitating communication between cells. Simply put, they are a big deal when it comes to cognitive health.

According to Taylor Wallace, Ph.D., CFS, FACN, a professor at George Mason University and a Forbes Health advisory board member, your body can produce around 10 percent of the amount of EPA and DHA you need from ALA that's consumed in your diet. In other words, your body can convert ALA into EPA and DHA. However, as we age and with the onset of cognitive decline, this conversion rate starts to decline to less than 10 percent.

"In both animal and human studies, when the diet is void of omega-3 fatty acids, the levels of DHA in particular in the brain decrease, accelerating aging and affecting memory," says Wallace.

But don't let this scare you, says Mascha Davis, M.P.H., RDN, who is the author of the book *Eat Your Vitamins*. By incorporating omega-3s into your diet—yes, even starting right now—you can begin to reap their benefits well into your future.

"Omega-3s act as a powerful anti-inflammatory agent," Davis explains. "When we experience chronic inflammation in the body, cognitive health may decline, and age-related chronic disease conditions may increase. Adequate daily intake of omega-3s has been shown to help to reduce inflammation in the body and thus protect against some age- and inflammatory-related conditions."

A 2018 review published in *Nutrients* evaluated 25 randomized control studies spanning several years that looked at omega-3 supplementation and the role it played in brain health across the lifespan. Researchers found that subjects who supplemented with DHA and EPA saw improvements in blood biomarkers that resulted in health benefits, regardless of age. From increased literacy, attention and visual processing in school-age children to improved cognitive function in older adults, positive results from DHA and EPA supplementation were seen across the board.

While researchers agreed that a growing body of evidence suggests there are benefits of omega-3 supplementation to support brain health and protect against neurodegeneration in older adults, the methods and measures used were different

for each study. Some studies focused on older patients found that 480 milligrams of DHA and 720 milligrams of EPA daily showed benefits, while others mentioned 800 mg of DHA and 225 mg of EPA. So while it seems promising that these nutrients can help, further research is needed to create a consensus on optimum intake levels.

A more recent 2022 study in the journal *Nutrients* investigated 1,490 participants in the Framingham Offspring Cohort, a large study group of patients in the Boston area. Researchers evaluated the participants' red blood cell (RBC) DHA levels and subsequent incidence of Alzheimer's disease and all-cause dementia (dementia of any cause, including diseases and lifestyle factors such

as smoking and excessive alcohol use).

These researchers found that participants who had higher RBC DHA levels at baseline experienced a lower risk of Alzheimer's disease and all-cause dementia, as well as half the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease at follow-up appointments. We know that genetics play a role in diseases such as Alzheimer's, and researchers even found that those who were genetic carriers for Alzheimer's disease may also have benefitted from increased doses of DHA.

The Daily Intake

Current recommendations from the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans advise consuming fatty fish like salmon, tuna, mackerel or shrimp at least twice a week. However, given that 90 percent of Americans don't meet the recommended intake every week, a supplement may be a good option to help fill in the gaps. It's worth noting, though, that most supplements are totally unregulated, so be sure to choose one that has third-party certification to ensure label accuracy.

Both Wallace and Davis recommend a food-first approach for getting omega-3s. But they suggest taking supplements when dietary intake is lacking, because they offer a practical way to meet daily needs.

The National Institutes of Health adequate intake recommendations for omega-3s haven't been updated in more than 20 years. Keeping that in mind, the current guidelines recommend an omega-3 intake of 1.6 gram per day for men and 1.1 gram per day for women—but these numbers are reflective of ALA recommendations only. There are currently no U.S. government dietary





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recommendations regarding EPA and DHA.

With that said, the American Heart Association recommends at least 250 mg per day of DHA and EPA to prevent heart disease, per a 2022 report in the journal *Circulation*.

Omega-3 fatty acids, particularly EPA and DHA, are critical for healthy aging and cognition. While more research is needed on the recommended amounts for optimum brain health benefits, no matter how old you are, consider upping your intake of DHA and EPA omega-3 fatty acids. It's never too late—or too early—to start!

You can increase your intake by eating fatty fish,

such as salmon, sardines and herring, and plant-based sources, including chia seeds, walnuts and flaxseeds, at least twice a week.

And consider taking a fish oil or krill oil supplement. It's important to note, though, that you should consult your health care provider before starting any supplements, as they can be harmful for people with certain conditions.

Those following a vegetarian or vegan diet can get their EPA and DHA from algal oil supplements, which are derived from marine microalgae—the food source that fish use to store up EPA and DHA omega-3s. ●

THE FIVE BEST FISH

Try these cognitive catches rich in brain-friendly omega-3 fatty acids.

BY ELIZABETH SHAW, M.S., RDN, CPT
Reviewed by dietitian Emily Lachtrupp, M.S., RD

The brain is one of the most complex and fascinating organs in the human body. When it's fueled with optimum nutrition, it works at its prime, allowing you to think quickly. However, if your diet is lacking essential nutrients, you may experience difficulty concentrating, memory loss or mood changes.

Thankfully, researchers have spent countless hours learning about the important nutrients for brain health, and the omega-3 fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) continue to reign supreme. Both EPA and DHA have demonstrated their crucial role in supporting cognitive health. However, the human body can't produce them on its own. We need to get them in our diet, and both of these omega-3s are plentiful in fish.

But we're not eating enough fish. A 2021 review published in *Advances in Food and Nutrition*





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Spicy Sardine
Linguine
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sardines](https://eatingwell.com/sardines)

Research pinpointed just how important fish is for brain health. Not only did the scientists highlight how critical the fatty acids found in fish are for brain, eye and heart health, but they also discussed how underconsumed seafood is.

Why are omega-3s so important? Well, the brain is mostly made up of fat. “Out of the individual fatty acids in the brain, DHA, in particular, is found in high amounts,” says Kaitlin Roke, Ph.D., a researcher and director of scientific communication and outreach at the Global Organization for EPA and DHA Omega-3s (GOED). “DHA plays an important role in the cell membranes in our brain tissue and can also be important for nerve health, helping signals to flow smoothly across the body. EPA is also very important for brain-health functions and metabolic processes.”

So you’ll want to make a concerted effort to get these omega-3s into your diet. Even if you’re already a big fan of fish, you should be aware that some seafood selections are especially rich in these fatty acids. Knowing what to look for can make picking up fish less intimidating and more budget-savvy. Follow these tips from registered dietitian Elana Natker, an omega-3 nutrition expert and consultant with GOED.

Seafood is required to have country of origin labeling, which will tell you where the product came from. You might see “Made in the USA” or “Product of China.” Based on your location, this can help you identify the best choices for your family.

Keep sustainable choices in mind. Natker advises looking to see if the fish has a sustainability certification, such as the blue and white Marine

Stewardship Council logo or the red, white and blue Friend of the Sea logo. You can also check to see which kinds of fish are in season or are being overfished by going to the Monterey Bay Aquarium website [SeafoodWatch.org](https://www.seafoodwatch.org).

Know, too, that if you head to the frozen case to buy your seafood, it might be cheaper. Almost all seafood is flash-frozen shortly after it's caught in order to keep it fresh and to lock in nutrients.

Canned, tinned or pouch seafood is also relatively affordable and still supremely nutritious. As with any packaged food, be sure to read the ingredients list, since added sauces, seasonings and salt can affect how nutritious the product is. Read on for your five best fish choices.

Mackerel

Mélanie Plourde, Ph.D., a nutritional neuroscience researcher at Université de Sherbrooke in Canada, is a big fan of mackerel, a small fish that packs a lot of EPA and DHA. A 100-gram (3.5-ounce) serving of mackerel contains approximately 898 mg of EPA and 1,400 mg of DHA, according to the USDA. It's moist, flaky and slightly salty.

Just one serving of mackerel delivers significant amounts of calcium, vitamin D, vitamin A and choline. There's no shortage of nutrition with this fatty fish. To keep your health at the forefront, you can top your lunch salad with flaked wild-caught mackerel from a can or grill some for dinner.

Salmon

Salmon may be a more familiar fish to most people, and it's one that psychiatrist Joseph Hibbeln, M.D., recommends. According to the USDA, a 100-gram (3.5-ounce) serving of salmon contains approximately 862 mg of EPA and 1,100 mg of DHA. Whether you choose to enjoy salmon fresh, frozen or from a can, all forms count toward your EPA and DHA intake.

Herring

There's a huge plus to seeking out small fish: "Since they are in the lower feeding chain, they are less contaminated by heavy metals and other contaminants," explains Plourde. "They are also richer in omega-3 fatty acids [compared with] a similar portion of other fish."

According to the USDA, a 100-gram (about 3.5-ounce) serving of herring contains approximately 909 mg of EPA and 1,100 mg of DHA. While there is currently no defined level of EPA or DHA that the USDA recommends Americans consume, the American Heart Association recommends getting at least 250 mg per day of DHA and EPA to prevent heart disease, according to a 2022 report in the journal *Circulation*.

Sardines

Both Plourde and Hibbeln are proponents of including sardines in the diet. Sardines are a convenient tinned fish and come in a variety of flavors (such as lemon and olive oil or peri-peri), making it easy to experiment with the different options until you find the one you like best.

A 100-gram (3.5-ounce) serving of sardines contains about 473 mg of EPA and 509 mg of DHA, according to the USDA. What's more, sardines pack many nutrients that are known to be anti-inflammatory and heart-protective, such as calcium, potassium, magnesium and zinc, which may help manage cardiovascular disease, according to a 2023 article in the journal *Frontiers in Nutrition*. Try tossing some sardines with your pasta for a tasty protein- and omega-3-packed meal.

Tuna

Canned tuna is an accessible, affordable and delicious option. A 100-gram (3.5-ounce) serving of canned tuna (in water) contains approximately 25 mg of EPA and 197 mg of DHA, according to the USDA. Use canned tuna as a topping on a colorful, crunchy salad, or mix some with mayonnaise or plain strained yogurt and serve it over a half an avocado.

Neuroscientists confirm that you should be consuming fish regularly to support brain health. Unless you are vegan or have a food allergy, aim to include fatty fish—herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines and tuna—in your diet. These fish provide the beneficial omega-3 fatty acids EPA and DHA, which support cognitive health. Other seafood choices are also a go. "Consuming more seafood of any kind is good. Eat what you like best," says Hibbeln. ●

THE IMPACT OF ALCOHOL

Drinking too much could affect your mental health and function.

BY ADAM MEYER

Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

There's no denying that having a drink can be enjoyable and relaxing after a hectic day. Unwinding with a beer or a glass of wine can also help alleviate social anxiety and forge bonds with friends, coworkers and neighbors. And given that 86 percent of Americans 18 and older have consumed alcohol at some point, it's evident that alcohol is deeply ingrained in our culture. But while moderate alcohol consumption has been associated with some health benefits, regularly drinking too much can significantly impact your brain health.

How Alcohol Is Digested

Alcohol is unique in how it's digested and processed in the body. Once consumed, alcohol is metabolized by various pathways in the body that involve two enzymes, alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) and aldehyde dehydrogenase (ALDH).

Higher alcohol consumption has been associated with an increased risk of dementia.








Ginger-Thyme
Sparkling Lemonade
at [eatingwell.com/
lemonade](https://eatingwell.com/lemonade)

“When you swallow alcohol, it’s absorbed into the bloodstream, primarily from the small intestine,” explains Rachel Rohaidy, M.D., a psychiatrist at the Miami Neuroscience Institute. “Veins collect this blood and then send it to the liver, where it’s exposed to enzymes, which break down the alcohol and its byproducts.”

After passing through the small intestine, alcohol is rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream and dispersed throughout the body, including to the brain, kidneys and lungs. “Once in the bloodstream, alcohol affects the brain first,” says Sarah Schlichter, M.P.H., RDN, a dietitian at Bucket List Tummy. “While your whole body absorbs alcohol, it interferes with your brain. In most healthy people, blood circulates through the body in 90 seconds, thereby allowing alcohol to affect your brain and all other organs in a short amount of time. However, if food is present, it can significantly slow the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream.”

How Much Alcohol Is Safe?

There’s a time and place for everything, and alcohol is no exception. But the jury is still out about what amount is considered safe. Some research points to some health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption. However, other experts have suggested that no amount of alcohol consumption is actually safe.

A 2021 study published in *Nutrients* found that chronic alcohol consumption can alter the structure of your brain and lead to “functional dysregulation of key brain systems that control behavior such as reward processing, impulse control and emotional regulation.”

Says Rohaidy, “Alcohol is toxic to every single cell in your body. We also have to consider not just the alcohol itself, but the amount of alcohol ingested, the frequency with which a person ingests alcohol and whether the individual has preexisting medical issues.”

Limiting Your Intake

Regardless of what the science says, people are still going to drink. To protect your brain health if you do drink, following the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans is best. The guidelines recommend drinking alcohol in moderation by limiting intake to one drink or less per day for women and two drinks at most for men.

While some alcoholic beverages are considered safer than others, it depends on the amount and alcohol percentage. A standard drink, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is:

- 12 ounces of beer (5% alcohol content)
- 5 ounces of wine (12% alcohol content)
- 8 ounces of malt liquor (7% alcohol content)
- 1.5 ounces of distilled spirits or liquor like gin, rum, vodka or whiskey (40% alcohol content)

“For those with certain health conditions, on certain medications, under the age of 21, pregnant or at risk of becoming pregnant and those who can’t control how much they drink, no amount of alcohol is considered safe,” says Schlichter.

Alcohol and the Mind

Some research has indicated positive associations between alcohol consumption and cognition, according to a 2020 study published in *JAMA*. In the cohort study of 19,887 participants, researchers found that low to moderate drinking (less than eight drinks per week for women and less than 15 drinks per week for men) was significantly associated with a consistently higher “cognitive function trajectory.” This included increased cognition scores for mental status, word recall and vocabulary and a lower rate of cognitive decline.

A 2017 study published in *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* examined the effects of alcohol on mood and concluded that drinking alcohol was associated with greater positive mood and reduced negative mood. However, the researchers noted that those who reported using alcohol to cope with anxiety experienced fewer mood benefits.

“A drink may also boost your mood and levels of serotonin, a feel-good chemical produced in your brain, although mostly in the short term,” explains Schlichter. “These short-term benefits may extend to increased comfort, relaxation and increased social interactions.”

She continues, “Research has linked higher iron levels in the brain with neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s.” According to a July 2022 study published in *PLOS One* that included 20,729 participants, consuming more than four standard drinks per week may change iron levels in the brain, which can increase the risk of neurodegenerative disease. “Higher iron levels have also been correlated with slower executive function and reaction times,” Schlichter explains.

If you want to preserve brain volume as you age, abstaining from alcohol might help. In a March 2022 study published in *Nature Communications*, researchers observed that consuming one to two drinks daily can reduce brain volume. In addition, the total amount of volume lost increased as alcohol consumption went up.

Once ingested, alcohol first affects your prefrontal cortex. “The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain responsible for judgment and reasoning,” explains Rohaidy. “The frontal lobe is the area that helps with problem-solving, judgment and goal-oriented behaviors.”

Alcohol is a neurotoxin that can kill brain cells. “While some brain cells can be regenerated over time, damage may be permanent, as alcohol has long-lasting effects on neurotransmitters in the brain,” says Schlichter. Additionally, higher alcohol consumption has been associated with an increased risk of dementia, according to a 2020 review published in *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*.

Some research suggests that brain shrinkage from chronic alcohol use can be partially reversed with complete abstinence. One study found that eliminating alcohol intake increased brain volume. “Vitamin supplements and complete abstinence from alcohol may reverse symptoms of Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome, a brain and memory disorder resulting from thiamine deficiency that may result from alcohol, within the first two years after stopping drinking,” says Schlichter.

While drinking can help you unwind, there is conflicting science about whether any amount of alcohol consumption is actually good for you. So if and when you choose to kick back with some drinks, do it responsibly, and limit yourself to one or two drinks daily to support your brain health and help prevent cognitive decline. ●

CHEW YOUR FOOD!

Get munching. Working out your mouth and jaw muscles can boost your cognitive function.

BY KATY BOWMAN, M.S.

Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

W

hen choosing what to eat, most people consider the compounds in their food: the calories, fiber, vitamins and minerals. But there's something else you might want to think about when filling your

plate: how much you'll chew. It's not only your arms, legs and abs that need exercise—you have essential body parts in your head and neck that need regular movement too.

And, as it turns out, there's some pretty compelling research pointing to the impressive benefits that come with exercising your head and neck muscles via chewing, from helping you feel fuller for longer to improving your cognitive function and potentially protecting you from neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, that cause cognitive impairment.

Most of us chew daily, be it while noshing on a granola bar between meetings or chomping

on chicken come dinnertime—which should be enough to keep those muscles strong, right? Read on to learn more about why considering the consistency of your food is more important than you think, the connection between chewing and cognitive benefits and the tweaks you can make to your diet to work these muscles even more.

The Importance of Consistency

Throughout history, humans have used their entire body to gather, grow and prepare food. But the amount of labor most people put into their food has been steadily decreasing over time, and this goes for the movements involved in chewing as well. While the mortar, pestle and mill have been around for a long time, the number of items that mechanically break down food so you don't have to has significantly grown. Blenders, grinders, knives, food processors and graters, even the heat from your stove—all break down food for you. Consequently, your jaw muscles have a lot less to do.



The modern diet has become softer, and even diets made up of “whole” foods have become more processed—not chemically, but mechanically.

Full-size raw carrots, shredded carrots and cooked carrots are all “whole,” but they are not actually the same. While they might be equal in dietary nutrients, each requires your jaw to work in a different way. The uncut carrot requires big bites and tearing motions, the shredded carrots have been broken down by the grater and take less chewing movement, and the cooked carrots need just a little mashing with your tongue to make them easy to swallow. When you chew your food, you use many body parts, including your tongue, teeth, jawbone, skull and muscles.

Did you know that two of your body’s strongest muscles are the ones that move the jaw, called the masseters? Although these muscles are relatively small, they can exert the most pressure of all the skeletal muscles.

The Brain Health Link

The forces created when you chew play a role in how your body works: Chewing, ripping, tearing and swallowing stimulate your face and throat muscles and help develop optimal anatomy and function of your jaws and vocal cords—and even your brain. How does chewing support brain function? Likely in multiple ways.

According to a 2017 paper published in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, chewing helps preserve the hippocampus, the part of your brain that deals with memory and other cognitive functions, by increasing blood flow through your brain. Also, chewing has long been researched as a stress-reducing behavior, though the reasons for its calming effects remain unclear. Additionally, the force created when you bite helps increase your brain’s neuronal activity, per a 2019 review in the *International Dental Journal*.

Maybe you’re going out of your way to eat



brain-healthy foods, like omega-3-rich ones, but how often and how hard does your jaw work daily? Your chewing muscles might be doing the equivalent of sitting in a chair! Make sure you're not missing other opportunities to feed your brain while eating.

How to Feel Your Chewing Anatomy Working

Place your hands on the sides of your jaw and bite down lightly a few times, and then a few times again, with greater force. Now move your fingers up to your temples and repeat the process. Placing your hands just below your ears, slide your jaw to the right and left. You can feel how the movements that go into chewing work different areas of your face. Next, place your hands in all these places while you eat a soft food you often have—yogurt, soup or a smoothie. How much muscle use can you feel? Try again, now with something chewy—jerky, cheese or dried apricots—and again with something crunchy that you have to grind. Can you feel the difference?

How to Exercise Your Jaw Muscles with Food

You can buy jaw exercisers—rubber squares to bite down on repeatedly to help work the atrophying tissues of the face. But as a food lover, you can also shape your anatomy by what you choose to put on your plate, and how you decide to eat it.

Of course, there are times when soft food is warranted—eating with braces, fresh dental work or an oral injury. Outside of these times, though, you can approach meal preparation not only to receive the recommended daily allowance of vitamins and minerals but also for your recommended amount of daily movement.

Begin by considering the food movement found in your average day. How many of your calories do you drink versus chew? How soft is your food? You want to let your daily meals cross-train your mouth.

Certainly, smoothies are handy and full of dietary nutrients, but what about mechanical nutrients? Keep some ingredients out of the blender so

you can grind them up with your teeth instead. Swap your smoothie in a glass for a smoothie bowl, and top it with crunchy sliced almonds and coconut flakes, for example.

Replace a liquid meal with an unprocessed counterpart. For instance, rather than simply sipping pureed tomato soup, try a tomato soup recipe that contains chewable beans and greens.

Eat nuts, not just nut butters. Or turn your favorite nut butter into energy balls by adding some delicious crispy and chewy stuff—peanut butter energy balls, with oats, mini chocolate chips and shredded coconut, are delicious.

Add more texture to your diet simply for the exercise of it—think raw produce, beef jerky and dehydrated fruit. Fit your jaw stretches into your day by opening your mouth wide to snack on a whole apple or any other food that hasn't been pre-cut in a way that keeps you from taking your mouth through its full range of motion. Approach a bowl of greens or shredded cabbage salad as a workout for your face!

You want to get the most out of your food—the most flavor, the most nutrition, the best value. Chewing, grinding, tearing and all the movements that come with eating foods that haven't been mechanically processed are yet another way to think about not only eating, but eating well. So start working out your chewing muscles today! ●



The Goodness of Water

You know you're supposed to stay hydrated, but many of us don't. There are many reasons to keep that water bottle at hand.

BY ISADORA BAUM

Reviewed by dietitian Elizabeth Ward, M.S., RDN

Water is vital for good health, and really, it helps with everything. And since about 60 percent of the human body is water, according to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), it needs to maintain its hydration levels to fuel cells and keep the brain and body functioning.

That said, many of us aren't drinking nearly enough water daily—and we may be drinking too many dehydrating

sources, such as sugar-sweetened beverages and booze, which can strip the body of hydration. So what happens to your body if you don't drink enough? Here are nine unpleasant side effects.

Lower Energy Levels

You might notice your energy levels plummet when you're dehydrated. Water helps keep your mind alert and body

balanced, according to a 2019 review in *Nutrients*. If you're not drinking enough during the day, that afternoon slump will hit even harder, and you might feel too tired to continue with work or make it to your evening workout. Keep a water bottle next to you to remind yourself to consistently drink throughout the day.

Mental Fog

Your brain needs water, since it's made up of about 73 percent water, per the USGS, and drinking enough keeps you mentally sharp. The same 2019 review in *Nutrients* found that dehydration negatively affects working memory. Working memory allows you to remember information temporarily so that you can work without losing track of what you're doing. If you're feeling foggy and start to space out, chug some water and see if it helps.

Increased Risk of Stroke

According to a 2020 study in the *Journal of Clinical Neuroscience*, being dehydrated may raise the risk of stroke

and prolong recovery time if you've had one. So to keep your cardiovascular system in tip-top shape, pay attention to how much you're drinking. If your pee is dark yellow or you feel faint, drink some water pronto.

Moodiness

Dehydration can make you cranky, too. A 2019 review in *Nutrients* found that negative emotions such as anger, hostility, confusion, depression and tension increased with as little as 1 percent dehydration. So the next time you're feeling down or irritable, pour yourself a glass of water and take some time to just breathe and hydrate.

Eating Too Much

It's possible to confuse thirst with hunger, so drinking water first before you grab a snack can help distinguish what your body really needs. If you still feel hungry after you've hydrated sufficiently, then eat! It's important to listen to your body's cues and fuel it with what it needs.

Headaches

Since your brain needs water, being dehydrated






DIY Easy Flavored
Ice Cubes
at [eatingwell.com/
icecubes](https://www.eatingwell.com/icecubes)

can lead to headaches and fatigue, according to 2021 research in *Current Pain and Headache Reports*. Have some water and rest. It's possible that your pain might go away without your needing to take any other measures.

Skin Damage

Your skin needs water to stay healthy and look and feel hydrated. The 2019 *Nutrients* review showed that people who drank the most water had skin that was more elastic and was less dry

and rough. Not drinking enough water can increase premature wrinkles and other skin-aging signs. With insufficient water, collagen can crack, leading to fine lines and wrinkles. That's why it's important to include moisturizing, hydrating products in your skin-care regimen to complement your regular water intake.

Weaker Workouts

When you're sweating, you're losing electrolytes and water, so it's

important to drink before, during and after working out to replenish lost stores. As was shown in a 2021 study in the *Journal of Human Kinetics*, dehydration can decrease strength, endurance and power and, consequently, performance.

Weight Gain

A little weight gain is nothing to lose sleep over. That said, if it continues over time or is in the belly region in particular, it can put you at a greater risk

for various chronic diseases, including diabetes, heart disease and more. Drinking water might help you maintain a healthy weight, especially if you're drinking it in place of sugary beverages or other higher-calorie drinks, according to a 2019 review in *Nutrición Hospitalaria*. Water is filling, so it can help you feel less hungry in between meals and snacks—although you shouldn't drink water as a meal replacement.



Chapter 2

UNDERSTANDING CONDITIONS

Health considerations such as high cholesterol or a troublesome gut can affect your risk of developing dementia.

THE WARNING SIGNS

Memory lapses are a normal part of aging, but if you experience consistent cognitive impairment, it's time to see a doctor.

BY KRISSY BRADY

Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

It happens from time to time: You start telling a story, only to lose your train of thought halfway through. Or you walk into a room and can't remember what you went in there to do. Or the harder you try to remember the name of that kitchen utensil you need to buy, the further away its name slips.

Mental glitches like these happen to everyone and can be understandably scary, but they aren't necessarily a sign of cognitive decline. "The feeling of your brain short-circuiting is often more likely due to psychological processes," says Sarah Garcia-Beaumier, Ph.D., a licensed neuropsychologist and associate professor at Stetson University in Florida.

Increases in stress, distractions, multitasking, anxiety and depression can be big contributors. "A common consideration we have to make clinically is whether cognitive symptoms are due to early dementia or due to a depressive or anxiety disorder," Garcia-Beaumier explains.







The Difference Between Cognitive Lapses and Cognitive Decline

Cognitive decline is typically a neurodegenerative process in which you exhibit a worsening of performance in one or more areas, such as memory, attention or language.

We typically begin showing cognitive aging in our 30s, and some people exhibit more cognitive decline than others their age. Signs often include what we normally experience day to day—forgetting to call someone or losing the word you wanted to say. When those symptoms appear much more than they did previously, so much that others are starting to notice, “that’s typically an early red flag for cognitive decline beyond what we expect for the normal aging process,” says Garcia-Beaumier.

Normal aging will slow down memory retrieval, for example, and most individuals will have some difficulty remembering names of people, items or places—but these bits of memory usually come back in 10 to 15 minutes, or sometimes hours later.

“These minor glitches in memory aren’t a sign of evolving dementia or cognitive impairment,” says Thomas Hammond, M.D., a neurologist with Baptist Health’s Marcus Neuroscience Institute in Boca Raton, Florida. “Forgetting conversations or important appointments or feeling lost in familiar places is more worrisome and concerning.”

This doesn’t automatically mean you’ll end up with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, though. “In fact, some people who meet the criteria for what we call mild cognitive impairment actually resolve or stabilize without further decline,” says Garcia-Beaumier.

But if your lapses are related to psychological distress—or another underlying health issue—and you allow the stress to go on, that can put you at a higher risk of dementia, she adds.

The cortic limbic system of the brain modulates the experience of anxiety. “It also happens to be the same area of the brain that helps with processing speed, attention, planning, judgment, organization and lots of thinking skills,” explains Garcia-Beaumier. “So if there’s a change in this area of the brain due to stress or anxiety, these cognitive skills are also affected.”

This overlap in brain pathways, taken with the larger amount of resources going toward

modulating your stress and anxiety (because your body is essentially bouncing back and forth between survival and recuperation mode), will lead to a varying array of cognitive deficits.

These pathways are also crucial in processing information. If you can no longer pay attention to details, your brain isn’t going to be able to encode them and retain them for later memory.

Cognitive decline manifests itself in almost all aspects of complex daily tasks, and especially language. “Even a simple undertaking, like naming a kitchen appliance, engages our brain networks extensively, making it a sensitive indicator of early decline,” says Aubry Alvarez-Bakker, Ph.D., a neuroscientist and research lead at Yes Supply Co., a wellness coaching company.

A strong sign can be found in moments when you might forget a simple, specific word you’re looking for, so you try to describe the item instead. Over time, you might also start having difficulty keeping up with conversations, which could lead to increased anxiety in social situations.

The specific mechanism behind why this happens isn’t fully known or understood, but research shows that language decline often originates in the left side of the brain. “We also know that low production of BDNF [a protein produced by our nervous system that’s crucial for the production of new brain cells] means fewer new cells to help us carry on activity across our brain,” says Alvarez-Bakker.

As we age, production of this protein naturally declines, so our body relies heavily on our environment to create BDNF to “fertilize” our brain and allow new cells to form. “Among the best foods to consume to boost BDNF in our body—and subsequently ward off cognitive decline—are blueberries, turmeric, green tea and dark chocolate,” says Alvarez-Bakker.

Because apathy is a common symptom of severe burnout, it’s easy to pay no mind that it can also be a symptom of cognitive decline. “It’s actually

Normal aging slows down memory retrieval, and most individuals will have some difficulty with names of people, items or places.

the most common symptom, and perhaps the most overlooked,” says Alvarez-Bakker.

A sudden loss of interest in activities you used to love, or a willingness to throw in the towel easily, is another common symptom of dementia. You might lose interest in reading books, gardening or other activities you used to enjoy. You might also find that tasks that used to be easy to accomplish are now overwhelming or that you avoid complex projects entirely.

“This is unfortunate, because withdrawing from stimulation is known to speed up the decline process,” says Alvarez-Bakker. “Luckily, our lifestyle can help counteract this symptom to an extent.” When apathy creeps in, the best step to take is to get personal by integrating things you deeply enjoy—music, art, sports, reminiscing—into daily activities that will boost your participation in life, and, in turn, stimulation.

Subtle personality changes are an often-missed sign of cognitive decline, primarily because of how easily they can be blamed on chronic stress (say, becoming easily angered or swearing when the f-bomb isn’t a regular part of your vocabulary).

You might also find yourself withdrawing from social interactions and activities—and when you are around others, you may not participate in discussions but instead stay quiet. “These are symptoms that are often written off as an individual being shy,” says Hammond. “However, a person who was once talkative and garrulous will often become quiet and a wallflower as an early sign of developing cognitive decline.” Regardless if stress is the cause or a variable that’s augmenting the cognitive decline, “any treatment hoping to prevent or reduce cognitive decline needs to incorporate stress management,” says Isaac Tourgeman, Ph.D., an associate professor of neuropsychology at Albizu University in Miami.

Incessantly ruminating and worrying keeps your fight-or-flight response in overdrive, and symptoms of chronic stress, such as forgetfulness and inattention, can mimic cognitive decline. “Uncontrolled toxic thinking has the potential to create a state of low-grade inflammation across the brain and body over time, which can impact our cognitive health and ability to remember or recall information,” says Caroline Leaf, Ph.D., a neuroscientist and author of *Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess: 5 Simple,*

Scientifically Proven Steps to Reduce Anxiety, Stress, and Toxic Thinking. “If left unmanaged, this kind of chronic cognitive upset can progress into varying levels of cognitive decline.”

Resolution of the underlying causes of your rumination and worry is paramount to improving current and preventing future symptoms of cognitive decline.

“Cognitive dulling is a common feature associated with general medical illnesses, such as the flu, urinary tract infection and gastroenteritis,” says Hammond. “Metabolic stress caused by minor infection will often lead to metabolic encephalopathy, which is simply a transient cognitive decline.”

Other conditions can also lead to cognitive decline, including sleep disorders (such as sleep apnea), diabetes and cardiovascular issues. “Similar to psychological distress, sometimes symptoms can be resolved if it’s due to one of these conditions,” says Garcia-Beaumier. “But if left untreated, it does increase a person’s risk of dementia down the line.”

Depression also becomes an important rule-out and can result in what’s called pseudodementia, where the depression essentially masquerades as cognitive impairment. “Symptoms present as forgetfulness, difficulty with attention and lowered energy and motivation,” says Tourgeman. This is when it’s especially important to consult with your doctor to ensure the right diagnosis is made and proper treatment given.

“We all experience cognitive glitches to a certain extent when going through the pressures of life, but a good rule of thumb is that if anyone who knows you well has noticed a consistent increase of these symptoms over time, it may be a sign that you’re experiencing cognitive decline,” says Leaf. Usually the person experiencing symptoms is the last to be aware of the decline, so it’s important to be open to feedback from others and proactive about taking action.

How to Prevent or Slow Cognitive Decline

“While we currently aren’t able to change our genes, we can influence how our environment impacts them,” says Tourgeman. “A healthy lifestyle—eating a health-conscious diet [especially one made for boosting brain health, like the MIND



diet], exercising regularly, reducing stress and distractions, maintaining a sense of utility and connectedness—can go a long way.”

No healthy lifestyle with the goal of avoiding or improving cognitive decline would be complete without a wide range of activities that keep your brain engaged. “Playing brain games on your phone will only go so far, though, mostly because you’ll only get really good at that one thing,” says Garcia-Beaumier. “Doing lots of activities that you enjoy and that challenge you is best.” Reading, learning a new language and dancing can all contribute to optimal cognitive health when done in conjunction with other healthy habits.

When It’s Time to See a Doctor

“Anytime someone’s noticing cognitive changes [their memory isn’t as good, or their thinking seems

slower or foggy], they should check in with their doctor,” says Garcia-Beaumier. “But it’s especially important if family or friends are also noticing issues, or if the issues make it hard to fulfill your daily responsibilities.”

You can try to work on decreasing stress and improving how you take care of other health conditions to see if doing so also clears up any cognitive issues, but there isn’t a definitive way to know whether your symptoms are due to stress, psychological issues, another health condition or cognitive decline without talking to your doctor and possibly seeing specialists for further testing.

“Even getting some basic tests done early, before any issues arise, can allow your doctor to compare your current cognitive performance to possible cognitive issues in the future,” says Garcia-Beaumier. ●

Regular exercise can help strengthen your bones and protect brain health.



The Importance of Healthy Bones

Bolster your bone density and support your long-term brain health all at once.

BY KARLA WALSH

Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

Your bones and brain seem like two fairly separate systems, right? The brain tells the muscles how to move the bones, true. But otherwise, when you look at neurons versus osteoblasts, smarts versus structure, these body parts don't seem to have a lot in common.

But just as gut health can help (or hurt) your mood, there are some other surprisingly systemic relationships within our fascinating, complex bodies.

According to a study

published in March 2023 in *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology (AAN), people with low bone density may be at a 42 percent higher risk for developing dementia later in life compared with their peers with higher bone density.

Mohammad Arfan Ikram, M.D., Ph.D., who is the study's author and a professor and head of neuro-epidemiologic research at the Erasmus University Medical Center in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and his team tapped into data from the Rotterdam Study, a large bank of Dutch residents who have signed on to take part in research.

The 3,651 participants the team analyzed were an average of 72 years old and did not have a dementia diagnosis at the outset of the study. Every four to five years, each person received a physical exam, which included X-rays to track bone density. Each was also regularly interviewed and given cognition tests.

Over the next 11 years, Ikram and his team found that 688 individuals (19 percent) went on to develop dementia. Among the 1,211 people with the lowest total-body bone density at the outset, 90 people (about 7.4 percent) developed dementia over the course of the following decade. Among the 1,211 with the highest total-body bone density, only 57 (about 4.7 percent) developed dementia during that same time span.

After crunching all the

numbers and adjusting for age, sex, medication use, education level and family history of dementia, the study found that people with the lowest total-body bone density were 42 percent more likely to develop dementia over the next 10 years compared with their neighbors with the strongest bones.

"Low bone density and dementia are two conditions that commonly affect older people simultaneously, especially as bone loss often increases due to physical inactivity and poor nutrition during dementia," Ikram noted in an AAN press release. "However, little is known about bone loss that occurs in the period leading up to dementia. Our study found that bone loss indeed already occurs before dementia and thus is linked to a higher risk of dementia."

While these results suggest that low bone density may precede cognitive decline, it's important to consider that both of these conditions get more common as people age. The scientists admit that it's too early to prove cause and effect and that more and deeper dives are required, involving a more racially diverse and age-diverse pool of participants.

For reference, osteoporosis affects about 20 percent of women and 5 percent of men over age 50, according to the National Institutes on Aging. Nearly 10 percent of all Americans over the age

of 65 have been diagnosed with dementia, and an additional 22 percent have signs of mild cognitive impairment.

"Previous research has found factors like diet and exercise may impact bones differently, as well as the risk of dementia. Our research has found a link between bone loss and dementia, but further studies are needed to better understand this connection between bone density and memory loss," Ikram said in the press release. "It's possible that bone loss may occur already in the earliest phases of dementia, years before any clinical symptoms manifest themselves. If that were the case, bone loss could be an indicator of risk for dementia, and people with bone loss could be targeted for screening and improved care."

Although the dementia study found that those who have

weaker bones appear to be at higher risk for developing dementia later on in life, it's too early to tell if this is simply a coincidence among these two common aging-related conditions or if it's an actual connection.

Many of the risk factors for a decrease in brainpower and bone strength overlap, so as we continue to learn more about the possible link, it certainly can't hurt to integrate healthy habits that benefit our brain and bones simultaneously.

Exercise such as consistent running or brisk walking strengthens bones and makes them more dense, according to the National Institutes of Health. And calcium is a mineral your body requires to build and maintain strong bones. You can get the recommended daily amounts of calcium you need by eating a variety of foods, including milk, cheese, kale and broccoli.



WATCH YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVELS

Keeping your heart health in check is a vital part of staving off cognitive decline.

BY ADAM MEYER

Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

Keeping your heart and brain in tip-top shape is critical for a long, healthy life. That's not surprising, considering heart disease is the top cause of death in America, and Alzheimer's disease, the most common type of dementia, ranks seventh. While several dementia risk factors—such as age, genetics and family history—are not modifiable, research shows there are several other dementia risk factors within your control.

Healthy lifestyle habits can improve biomarkers associated with an increased risk of chronic illness, including heart disease, diabetes and dementia. These biomarkers include your cholesterol levels. According to a study published in 2022 in *Scientific Reports*, having high low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (often referred to as the “bad” cholesterol) is linked to an increased risk of all types of dementia. Read on for more details about

the findings and the link between heart health and dementia, plus lifestyle tips to support your heart and brain health while reducing your dementia risk.

What the Research Says

The 2022 findings resulted from a nationwide population-based cohort study that explored the link between cholesterol levels and dementia risk, including vascular dementia or Alzheimer's disease, in the presence of diabetes and statin use. Researchers examined data from the Korean National Health Insurance Services that included a staggering 6,883,494 individuals age 40 and older who underwent health exams in 2009. During an eight-year follow-up period, researchers detected 263,185 dementia cases—nearly 4 percent of the cohort. Among the study participants, those with high LDL cholesterol levels had the highest risk of all-cause dementia, regardless of whether they had diabetes or not.





“It’s assumed that high cholesterol levels [hypercholesterolemia] increase the risk of dementia,” says Anja Wagner, M.D., FACC, a cardiovascular disease specialist with Hartford HealthCare Heart & Vascular Institute at St. Vincent’s Medical Center. “The association is present for both vascular dementia and Alzheimer’s disease, although the magnitude of risk is higher for vascular dementia.”

Additionally, the researchers noted that the study participants who used statins (cholesterol-lowering drugs) were more likely to develop dementia. Whether it’s type 1 or type 2, several other studies have found that diabetes is associated with a significantly increased dementia risk later in life. “High levels of insulin resistance can cause type 2 diabetes. Insulin resistance in the body has been linked to a decline in cognitive function and an increased risk of dementia,” explains Erin Palinski-Wade, RD, CDCES, a registered dietitian and diabetes educator.

How to Protect the Heart and Brain

Fortunately, improving your cholesterol levels and reducing your risks of dementia and diabetes can be within your control. And adopting healthy lifestyle habits can slash your odds of developing dementia later in life. To help guide you, the American Heart Association (AHA) created Life’s Essential 8, a checklist for good lifelong health that can help reduce your risk of chronic illness. (The Essential 8 are: Eat a balanced diet, be active, quit tobacco, get healthy sleep, manage weight, control cholesterol, manage blood sugar, and manage blood pressure.) Consider implementing some new habits in your daily life to boost your heart and brain health.

Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet that includes a variety of fruits and vegetables, lean protein, nuts, seeds and healthy oils such as olive and canola oil.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week, along with two days of resistance training to maintain strength and muscle. “Daily exercise can help to reduce stress and blood pressure levels, helping to improve heart health. In addition, daily movement improves circulation, which directly benefits the brain,” explains Palinski-Wade. Find a type of movement you enjoy and stick with it!

Several studies have linked tobacco use to an increased risk of many devastating diseases, including heart disease, cancer and dementia. Talk to your health care provider for resources to help with quitting if you smoke.

Get at least seven hours of sleep per night to help promote muscle recovery, boost brain function and reduce chronic disease risk. That can be easier said than done, but sleep is critical to your health in just about every way, so be sure to prioritize catching more z’s.

Over time, consistent blood sugar spikes can damage your heart, brain, kidneys, eyes and nerves and increase your risk for diabetes. “Studies have suggested that worse glycemic control is associated with greater cognitive decline in patients with diabetes,” Wagner says. “Therefore, blood glucose control and heart-healthy lifestyle habits are critical for preserving heart and brain health in people with diabetes.” There are several healthy habits that can help keep your blood sugar more consistent, from your diet to exercise and even drinking more water. Keep blood pressure within a healthy range and manage stress. High blood pressure is above 130 mm Hg systolic pressure (the top number in a reading) or above 80 mm Hg diastolic pressure (bottom number).

In addition to the AHA’s recommendations, Palinski-Wade recommends adding more fiber to your diet. “Include foods such as whole fruits and vegetables, beans and legumes, nuts and seeds and whole grains,” she advises. “These foods will help lower your LDL cholesterol while promoting blood sugar balance and reduced visceral fat levels—all factors that will improve heart and brain health.”

While research has shown that high levels of LDL cholesterol are associated with an increased risk of all-cause dementia, adopting healthy lifestyle habits and eating a heart-healthy diet abundant in fiber can help lower it, protecting your body’s most vital organs and adding more healthy years to your life. ●

Lifestyle habits can improve biomarkers associated with an increased risk of chronic illness, including heart disease, diabetes and dementia.

What to Know About Chronic Constipation

Staying regular may help lower your risk for cognitive decline.

BY KARLA WALSH

Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

Pooping isn't the most polite happy hour or dinner conversation. But it's high time we talk s--t a bit more, because a lot of us are having far too few bowel movements.

According to a study published in *The American Journal of Gastroenterology* in 2020, between 9 and 20 percent of Americans suffer from chronic constipation, and 37 percent have discussed the issue with their doctor. (Constipation is defined as pooping less than three times per week or having stools that are hard, dry, lumpy or difficult to pass.)

Chronic constipation has been correlated with chronic inflammation that can increase disease risk, as well as anxiety and depression. But there's still a lot we don't know about the gut-brain axis—the relationship between digestive and cognitive health.

While the gut and brain might seem to have zero things in common, a healthy GI tract can significantly impact our long-term capacity to think, learn, reason, solve problems, make decisions, pay attention

and remember, a new study suggests.

Chronic constipation—pooping less than every three or more days—has been linked to a 73 percent higher risk for perceived cognitive decline, according to a first-of-its-kind study that explored how constipation might affect the aging mind. The findings were presented in July 2023 at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference.

"Our body systems are all interconnected," Heather M. Snyder, Ph.D., Alzheimer's Association vice president of medical and scientific relations, explained in a press release. "When one system is malfunctioning, it impacts other systems. When that dysfunction isn't addressed, it can create a waterfall of consequences for the rest of the body. Still, there are a lot of unanswered questions about the connection between the health of our digestive system and our long-term cognitive function."

The study set out to try to help answer more of these outstanding questions in the hope of inching the medical

community closer to novel therapies and potential solutions for how to reduce risk for Alzheimer's disease and dementia, Snyder added.

Lead author Chaoran Ma, Ph.D., a former research fellow at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School and a current assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and her team gathered data from the Nurses' Health Study and Nurses' Health Study II—involving individuals who identified as women—as well as the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study, which focused on people who identified as men. These three population studies tracked risk factors for the most common chronic diseases in the United States. The gender categories are the only demographic information reported in these studies, and it's not known if additional information (including sex assigned at birth, sexual orientation or gender expression) was collected as part of the research.

Ma and her team collected data on each participant's bowel movement frequency during 2012 and 2013 and then asked individuals to complete self-assessments about their cognitive function from 2014 to 2017. They then measured objective cognitive function via tests between 2014 and 2018. A total of 12,696 participants completed all three of those categories.

After crunching the numbers, the scientists found that those who were constipated tended to have poorer cognitive function than their regularly pooping peers. In fact, compared with those who reported bowel movements daily (which is how often it's "normal" to poop, gastroenterologists say), participants who went three days or more between bowel movements appeared to have about three years more of chronological cognitive aging. In other words, chronic constipation might increase your "brain age" beyond your physical age by three years. They were also at 73 percent higher risk for subjective



cognitive decline.

Those who pooped more than twice a day seem to be at higher risk for earlier cognitive decline, too, but less so than the cohort who was constipated.

Individuals who had fewer of certain kinds of “good” bacteria in their gut had less frequent bowel movements and seemed to have less sharp brains, too.

This study hints that,

over time, pooping less than once every three days may do a number on your brain health. The research does not prove that constipation causes cognitive decline or more rapid brain aging, but it does suggest a link. More studies are required to identify why this happens and to find out if there’s any causal link involved in this gut-brain axis connection.

Until we know more,

it’s important to keep in mind that there are several totally normal reasons you might be constipated, including not drinking enough water and not eating enough fiber. But whatever the cause, try to get your system back on track so you can lower the chances of having to deal with bloating—and possible brain-health collateral damage. To relieve constipation fast:

- Increase your water intake, aiming to drink at least 64 ounces of water per day.
- Get moving. Even a 15-minute walk can help move the needle.
- Sprinkle in high-fiber foods. Women should get about 25 grams of fiber a day, and men should get about 31 grams a day, per the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a grey and white wrap-style top and dark pants, is walking on a sandy beach. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows the ocean and a cloudy sky.

Chapter 3

THE LIFESTYLE DIFFERENCE

The MIND diet's major impact
on brain health can be augmented
with other everyday practices.



8 HEALTHY HABITS FOR LASTING BRAIN HEALTH

Cognitive decline affects 1 in 9 adults and can show up as early as your mid-40s. Help prevent it by embracing these lifestyle changes.

BY SARAH ANZLOVAR, M.S., RDN, LDN

Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

Did you know that 1 in 9 adults will experience cognitive decline as they age? While we often think of cognitive decline as something that only happens to people in their 80s and 90s, more than 10 percent of adults 45 to 65 experience what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention refers to as “subjective cognitive decline.” Genetics play a role, but many lifestyle adjustments can not only ward off cognitive decline but also enhance cognitive function such as sleep habits, diet and exercise.

Research shows that lifestyle choices affect our brain health as we age, and studies continue to shed light on the importance of prioritizing healthy habits such as eating fruits and vegetables and moving your body regularly. Beyond this expected advice (because you probably already know the benefits of eating your veggies), there are some habits that can affect your brain health in ways that may surprise you.

1. Make time for exercise

“Exercise can help prevent cognitive decline by elevating the heart rate and increasing blood flow to the brain,” says Lauren Harris-Pincus, M.S., RDN, the founder of Nutrition Starring You. Exercise also increases a chemical called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), which plays an important role in memory and cognitive development. Low BDNF levels have been associated with reduced cognitive function, as well as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s disease.

Aim to get in about 30 minutes of low- to moderate-intensity exercise most days. This doesn’t have to be all at once, and every bit counts. Choose exercise you enjoy, whether that’s running, dancing, hiking, yoga or walking.

The activities of daily living, including cleaning your house, gardening and running around with your kids (or grandkids) can also contribute positively to your movement goals.





2. Skip artificial sweeteners

“Artificial sweeteners such as aspartame can wreak havoc on brain health and may lead to cognitive decline later in life,” says Nicole Stefanow, M.S., RDN, a dietitian in the greater New York City area. Research has linked artificially sweetened beverages such as diet soda to increased risk of dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. Animal studies suggest that aspartame in particular may negatively affect brain health as well as memory and cognition. One review suggests that aspartame may also be a chemical stressor on the brain that can lead to negative neurological symptoms and reduced cognitive function over time.

Pay attention to excessive added sugar, too. “High sugar intake has been associated with impaired memory and increased risk of dementia,” says Vandana Sheth, RDN, CDCES, the author of *My Indian Table: Quick & Tasty Vegetarian Recipes*.

So what’s someone with a sweet craving to do?

A little bit of real sugar—whether it comes from maple syrup, honey or table sugar—is just fine. Don’t be afraid to add a teaspoon of sugar to your morning coffee, sweeten your yogurt with honey or enjoy the occasional cookie or ice cream. Aim to keep your daily added sugar intake to less than 6 teaspoons (24 grams) for women or 9 teaspoons (36 grams) for men. The sugar found in fruit doesn’t count toward this limit, so grab a bowl of fresh seasonal fruit to satisfy your sweet craving anytime!

3. Embrace connections

“Social interactions may protect memory and cognitive function as you age. People who have strong social ties are less likely to experience cognitive decline. So even as you age, becoming a social butterfly is good for your health,” says Lisa Young, Ph.D., RDN, author of *Finally Full, Finally Slim*. In an era when connecting via social media often replaces in-person connections, it’s important to

put down your phone and get together with family and friends. Excessive screen time is associated with premature cognitive decline, suggesting that connecting in real life is even more important to brain health as you age.

4. Prioritize sleep

Both quality and quantity of sleep matter when it comes to brain health (and overall health). “Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night. Studies show that sleep deprivation increases the concentration of amyloid peptides in the brain, which may lead to Alzheimer’s disease. Adequate sleep has the opposite effect,” says Julie Andrews, M.S., RDN, CD, FAND, author of the *MIND Diet Plan*.

If you’re skimping on sleep, prioritize getting to bed earlier. If you have trouble falling or staying asleep, try eliminating any screen time an hour before bed, and create a calming bedtime routine. Last, if you’re waking up after seven to nine hours still completely exhausted, this could be a sign of other sleep problems, such as sleep apnea. Talk with your doctor about whether a sleep study or another intervention might be right for you.

5. Forget fad diets and expensive “superfoods”

Yes, foods like kale, spirulina and acai all offer health benefits. But if you get too focused on fancy “superfoods,” you might miss out on other foods that provide brain-health benefits. Foods not traditionally considered to be superfoods, like walnuts, beets and eggs, are all linked to better cognitive function. In addition, red peppers, oranges, strawberries and other vitamin-C-rich foods may also prevent cognitive decline, as vitamin C is linked to cognitive function.

While these foods may not sound as sexy as goji

berries or matcha, focusing on variety and eating a well-balanced diet filled with a variety of plant-based foods is what matters most. “Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans and fish contain antioxidants and nutrients to prevent cognitive decline,” says Andrews. Following a plant-rich Mediterranean-style diet is known to be much more effective at warding off cognitive decline than any individual food—super or not.

6. Manage your stress

Some stress is unavoidable, but chronic stress that goes unaddressed can have a negative impact on the brain. Several studies have linked psychological stress to increased risk of cognitive decline. Job strain at middle age has been linked to cognitive decline later in life, as have stressful life events.

Since it’s impossible to eliminate stress from your life completely (for most people, at least!), find ways to cope with stress to reduce your risk of cognitive decline. Try guided meditation or deep-breathing exercises, regular exercise, spending time outside, journaling or engaging in another hobby you enjoy. Most important, make time—even if it’s just a few minutes a day—to take care of yourself.






 Braised Lentils & Kale
 with Fried Eggs
 at [eatingwell.com/
 lentils](http://eatingwell.com/lentils)

7. Enjoy egg yolks

If an egg-white omelet is still your go-to brunch order (or post-workout breakfast), you may want to rethink that habit. “It’s true that egg whites contain high quality protein, but the yolk is where all of the brain-boosting nutrients live, like choline and lutein. Eating only the whites is not doing your brain any favors,” says Lauren Manaker, M.S., RDN, LD, CLEC, CPT, a women’s health expert and author of *The First-Time Mom’s Pregnancy Cookbook*.

Higher choline intake is linked to better cognitive performance, yet most people fall short of the recommended 425 milligrams a day for women and 550 milligrams a day for men. One whole egg, which is one of the best food sources of choline, contains 147 milligrams. If you’re concerned about the cholesterol in eggs, know that dietary cholesterol has less of an effect on blood cholesterol (for most people) than was once thought. Unless you’ve been told by your doctor to limit eggs, there is no reason you need to skip the yolks.

If you don’t love eggs, another good source of

choline is chicken. “Dark- and white-meat chicken both contain vitamin B12 and choline, which together may aid in cognitive performance in older adults,” says Manaker.

8. Mind your alcohol intake

“Alcohol can affect memory and how the brain functions. Chronic excessive alcohol consumption can interfere with the brain’s communication pathway by reducing the size of the neurons used to transmit information in the brain,” says Joan Salge Blake, Ed.D., RDN, LDN, FAND, a professor of nutrition and the host of the award-winning nutrition and health podcast *Spot On!*

Regular overconsumption of alcohol (more than two drinks per day) is linked to cognitive decline. “Moderation is key,” says Blake. If you do choose to drink, stick to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks for men. “Pace your consumption by drinking nonalcoholic beverages before and after your drink of choice,” Blake recommends. “Mocktails are wonderful for this.” ●

Walking for Brain Health

Lacing up your walking shoes may significantly lower your risk factors for dementia.

BY KARLA WALSH

Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

Aging and genetics are the biggest risk factors for dementia, according to the U.K. nonprofit Alzheimer's Society. Still, small adjustments to your lifestyle habits can make a big difference as well, a growing body of research suggests.

Admittedly, cognitive decline might seem like a far-off worry. But the habits you have today can impact your risk level later on in life, studies say. Not smoking, eating fewer refined carbs and more dietary fiber, sleeping seven to nine hours a night, and keeping your brain well engaged can all reduce your risk for cognitive decline that impacts your daily life (also known as dementia).

Currently, 1 in 9 American adults over age 65 have Alzheimer's disease (one of the main causes of dementia). By 2050, when those who were born in 1985 will turn 65, the rate of Americans living with dementia is expected to more than double, the Alzheimer's Association predicts.

One invigorating way to step up your brain support, according to a study published in 2023 in the journal *JAMA*

Neurology: walking. Individuals who lace up their sneakers and walk 9,800 steps per day are half as likely to develop dementia as their less-active peers. Does that sound unrealistic? Even walking just 3,800 steps each day (about 2 miles) can decrease your dementia risk by 25 percent.

The best pace? More

than 40 steps per minute, which is less than 2 miles per hour.

This is one of many studies that have found that staying in motion as you get older—even for a mere 10 minutes daily—can help both your brain and body age at a slower pace.

Regular exercise had a bigger impact on dementia risk than eating

a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy body weight and consuming a moderate amount of alcohol (or less), according to an Alzheimer's Society review of 11 studies.

Put on a comfortable, supportive pair of walking shoes and get yourself out there! Your mind and muscles will be better for it.







THE POWER OF LISTENING

This everyday human activity can make a big difference in brain health.

BY KARLA WALSH

Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

As many as 1 in 5 people 65 and older are currently living with some form of mild cognitive impairment (MCI), which can negatively impact memory, decision-making and reasoning skills. In 60 to 80 percent of cases, MCI eventually progresses to Alzheimer's disease, the Alzheimer's Association reports.

Since we're still unsure what causes the vast majority of cognitive impairment diagnosis—nor do we yet have a cure—scientists are diving into current health databases and conducting their own research to try to determine if there are any factors we can control. Recently, we've learned more about how important many of our daily habits are for lowering the risk of dementia (defined as MCI strong enough to alter daily life). In recent years, researchers have discovered that walking three times per week, not smoking, eating a berry-strong menu and averaging



more than six hours of sleep per night can have serious benefits for your brain health.

In 2021, scientists from NYU Langone Health landed on a surprising new brain booster. According to their study, published in the journal *JAMA Network Open*, people who have another person available most or all of the time who can listen to them show better, greater cognitive resilience—they have a brain that functions about four years younger than expected relative to their physical age.

“These four years can be incredibly precious. Too often we think about how to protect our brain health when we’re much older, after we’ve already lost a lot of time to build and sustain brain-healthy habits,” lead researcher Joel Salinas, M.D., assistant professor of neurology at NYU Grossman School of Medicine and a member of the department of neurology’s Center for Cognitive Neurology, tells NYU Langone Health News Hub. “But today, you can ask yourself if you truly have someone available to listen to you in a supportive way, and ask your loved ones the same. Taking that simple action sets the process in motion for you to ultimately have better odds of long-term brain health.” So as a strong echo to other factors that can lower or raise risk for Alzheimer’s disease, social support—including having a friend, a family member or even an acquaintance who will truly listen—can help your brain ward off decline.

“While there is still a lot that we don’t understand about the specific biological pathways between psychosocial factors like listener availability and brain health, this study gives clues about concrete, biological reasons why we should all seek good listeners and become better listeners ourselves,” says Salinas, who suggests that doctors might want to ask their patients whether they have someone to count on to listen when they need to chat.

“Loneliness is one of the many symptoms of depression and has other health implications for patients,” he adds. “These kinds of questions about a person’s social relationships and feelings of loneliness can tell you a lot about a patient’s broader social circumstances, their future health and how they’re really doing outside of the clinic.”

Since this was just one study performed on a specific pool of Americans, we’ll need more data to confirm this link to brain health. Still, it can never hurt to tap into your social networks—in person or via video chat or phone—when you’d like to get something off your chest. And if you don’t feel comfortable doing so with a loved one or think you might benefit from calling in the pros, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a thorough list of resources for finding a skilled mental health expert tailored to you. ●

Jamming Out

Not only is playing music fun, but it can support cognitive function for older adults.

BY KARLA WALSH

Reviewed by dietitian Jessica Ball, M.S., RD

A growing body of research suggests that some of our dementia risk is in our own hands. The brain-boosting prescription most research focuses on is related to consuming a well-balanced diet, moving your body and staying mentally and socially active.

These are definitely all still vital, but a 2021 study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* highlights another very impactful habit: playing music.

According to the meta-analysis of 21 previous studies, playing music rather than just listening to it can improve quality of life and mood while slowing the progression of dementia or mild cognitive impairment (MCI). The study defines MCI as “a preclinical state between normal cognitive aging and Alzheimer’s disease.”

Previous research has hinted at the fact that music as a hobby in general (say, listening or singing along) might be able to improve quality of life among seniors with MCI. In this study, scientists at the

University of Pittsburgh dug into already completed studies involving 1,472 people and discovered that active participation in making music can yield a small but significant positive outcome on cognitive health and sharpness. The beneficial effect of music participation is about on par with the advantages of regular physical exercise. (In fact, walking just three times per week could reduce your dementia risk.)

“Participating in music, like singing in a

choir or playing in a drum circle, is a safe, engaging activity that our research demonstrates can support cognition at a critical time for older adults facing cognitive decline,” says study author Jennie L. Dorris, Ph.D. “Based on this research, what we were able to find is that active music-making, no matter the type, is helpful for general thinking and memory.”

Looking forward, the research team from the University of Pittsburgh hopes to

analyze more about how improvisation while playing music might benefit the brains of those with MCI, plus the potential dementia-preventing properties of music.

As we continue to learn more, it certainly can’t hurt to dust off that old high school band instrument. Perhaps you can work your way up to playing your favorite song. Make it a regular habit and your your brain and your body will be well on their way to staying in their best possible shape.





Chapter 4

THE BEST RECIPES

Enjoy the MIND diet's delicious foods with these easy dishes for every meal.



5-Ingredient Roasted
Lemon Chicken &
Vegetables
at [eatingwell.com/
lemonchicken](http://eatingwell.com/lemonchicken)



BREAKFASTS

for

BRAIN HEALTH

Start the day with plenty of delicious veggies, fresh fruit and hearty eggs.

Cauliflower Eggs Benedict with Turmeric Yogurt Sauce

ACTIVE: 40 min
TOTAL: 40 min

We swapped in roasted cauliflower steaks for English muffins to pack veggies into your morning meal.

- 1 large cauliflower (2½ pounds)
 - 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
 - ½ teaspoon kosher salt plus ½ teaspoon, divided
 - 2 cloves garlic, minced
 - 14 cups chopped stemmed chard (about 2 bunches)
 - 1 teaspoon lemon zest
 - 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
 - ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
 - 1 cup low-fat plain yogurt, at room temperature
 - 1 teaspoon lemon juice
 - 1 teaspoon white-wine vinegar, divided
 - 4 large eggs
1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
 2. Using a sharp knife, cut the cauliflower into four ½-inch-thick steaks, making sure each steak includes part of the core to help it stay together; reserve any florets and extra cauliflower for another use. Brush both sides of the cauliflower with 2 tablespoons oil and season with ¼ teaspoon salt. Arrange on the prepared baking sheet. Roast until crisp and deeply golden, about 25 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add chard and cook, stirring, until wilted, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in ¼ teaspoon salt and lemon zest. Transfer to a bowl and cover to keep warm. Rinse and dry the skillet.
4. Place butter in a medium microwave-safe bowl and microwave on high until melted, 15 to 20 seconds. Whisk in turmeric and the remaining ½ teaspoon salt, then yogurt, lemon juice and ½ teaspoon vinegar.
5. Add 1½ inches water and the remaining ½ teaspoon vinegar to the skillet. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a low simmer. One by one, crack eggs into a small bowl and carefully transfer to the simmering water; cook until the whites are opaque and cover the yolks, about 3 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the poached eggs to a towel-lined plate.
6. Arrange a cauliflower steak on each of 4 plates. Top each with about ½ cup chard, then top with an egg and about ¼ cup hollandaise.

SERVINGS 4 SERVING SIZE 1
CAULIFLOWER STEAK, ½ CUP CHARD, 1 EGG & ¼ CUP SAUCE **CALORIES 410**
CARBOHYDRATES 24G DIETARY FIBER 8G
TOTAL SUGARS 11G PROTEIN 17G TOTAL FAT 29G SATURATED FAT 10G
CHOLESTEROL 213MG VITAMIN A 8274IU
VITAMIN C 177MG VITAMIN D 42IU VITAMIN E 5MG FOLATE 210MCG VITAMIN K 1091MCG
SODIUM 769MG CALCIUM 273MG IRON 5MG
MAGNESIUM 162MG POTASSIUM 1551MG
ZINC 2MG VITAMIN B12 1MCG





Anti-Inflammatory Lemon-Blueberry Smoothie

ACTIVE: 5 min

TOTAL: 5 min

The kale, hemp seeds and green tea in this bright, lemony smoothie all contain antioxidants that help fight inflammation. If you can't find baby kale, baby spinach will work well in its place.

- 1 cup frozen blueberries, plus more for garnish
- 1 medium ripe banana, peeled and frozen
- 1 cup packed baby kale
- ½ cup unsweetened plain almond milk
- ½ cup chilled unsweetened brewed green tea
- 2 tablespoons hulled hemp seeds

- ¾ teaspoon lemon zest, plus more for garnish
- 1½ tablespoons lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon honey (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon ground ginger

Place blueberries, banana, kale, almond milk, tea, hemp seeds, lemon zest, lemon juice, honey (if using) and ginger in a blender; process until smooth, about 25 seconds. Pour into a glass. Garnish with additional blueberries and/or lemon zest, if desired.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 2 CUPS
CALORIES 330 **CARBOHYDRATES** 52G
DIETARY FIBER 9G **TOTAL SUGARS** 29G
PROTEIN 10G **TOTAL FAT** 13G **SATURATED FAT** 1G **CHOLESTEROL** 0MG **VITAMIN C** 40MG **VITAMIN E** 5MG **SODIUM** 110MG
CALCIUM 320MG **IRON** 3MG **MAGNESIUM** 200MG **POTASSIUM** 956MG **ZINC** 3MG
OMEGA 3 2G





Hearty Breakfast Salad with Roasted Cabbage & Baked Feta

ACTIVE: 30 min

TOTAL: 1 hr

A breakfast salad is a fresh, delicious way to start your day with ample veggies. This recipe gets a hearty twist with cabbage and feta.

- 1 small red cabbage, cut into 6 wedges
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil plus $\frac{1}{2}$ cup, divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt, divided
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground pepper plus $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon, divided
- 1 6- or 7-ounce block feta cheese, drained
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 ripe avocado
- 1 cup chopped fresh parsley, divided
- 3 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups whole-wheat couscous
- Zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 6 large hard-boiled eggs, halved

- 1.** Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.
- 2.** Place cabbage on the prepared baking sheet. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons oil and season with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Roast for 25 minutes.
- 3.** Turn the wedges, separating the leaves a bit to ensure even cooking. Place feta block in the middle of the pan; drizzle it with 1 tablespoon oil and sprinkle with thyme and paprika. Continue roasting until the feta is softened and the cabbage is very tender, about 8 minutes more.
- 4.** Combine avocado, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup parsley, vinegar, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon pepper in a blender. Process until just combined. With the motor running, slowly drizzle in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil.
- 5.** Bring water to a boil in a small saucepan. Add couscous and the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and stir to combine. Cover and remove from heat. Let stand for 5 minutes. Add lemon zest, lemon juice and the remaining 1 tablespoon oil; fluff with a fork.
- 6.** Assemble the bowls with the couscous, cabbage, feta and eggs. Dollop the dressing on top and sprinkle with the remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ cup parsley.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** $2\frac{1}{2}$ CUPS
SALAD & 3 TBSP. DRESSING **CALORIES** 660
CARBOHYDRATES 63G **DIETARY FIBER** 14G
TOTAL SUGARS 7G **PROTEIN** 22G **TOTAL FAT** 38G **SATURATED FAT** 10G **CHOLESTEROL** 21MG
VITAMIN A 2443IU **SODIUM** 658MG



Sweet Potato, Broccoli & Wild Rice Hash

ACTIVE: 30 min

TOTAL: 30 min

Cooking this in cast iron ensures you'll get crusty bits, but any nonstick skillet will work fine.

Serve with your favorite hot sauce.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil plus 1 teaspoon, divided
- 1 pound sweet potato (1 large), peeled and cut into ½-inch pieces (3½ cups)
- ½ teaspoon salt, divided
- 2 cups small broccoli florets
- 3 small spring onions or scallions, sliced, whites and greens separated, divided
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 cup cooked wild rice or wild rice blend (see Tip)
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh tarragon
- 4 large eggs

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large cast iron or nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add sweet potato and season with ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook, stirring often, until lightly browned and softened, 8 to 10 minutes. Add broccoli and 1 tablespoon oil; cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Add spring onion (or scallion) whites and garlic; cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Stir in rice, spring onion (or scallion) greens, parsley and tarragon and remove from heat. Transfer to a plate and cover to keep warm.

2. Heat the remaining 1 teaspoon oil in the pan over medium heat. Crack eggs into the pan and season with the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt. Cook to desired doneness, 1½ to 2 minutes for a runny yolk and 3½ to 4 minutes for a firmer yolk. Serve the eggs on top of the hash.

Tip: Cultivated wild rice can take up to an hour to cook. To get that delicious earthy flavor (plus fiber you wouldn't get from white rice) fast, opt for a packet of precooked.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 EGG & 1 CUP HASH **CALORIES** 265 **CARBOHYDRATES** 27G **VITAMIN A** 14884IU **VITAMIN C** 52MG **VITAMIN D** 41IU **VITAMIN E** 2MG **FOLATE** 74MCG **VITAMIN K** 56MCG **SODIUM** 401MG **CALCIUM** 90MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 52MG **POTASSIUM** 612MG **ZINC** 2MG **VITAMIN B12** 1MCG

Acai Bowl

ACTIVE: 10 min
TOTAL: 2 hr 10 min

Acai are vibrant deep-purple berries native to Central and South America. The puree can be tart, so blending it with banana, coconut water and mixed berries adds sweetness to this bowl.

- 1 banana
- ½ cup frozen mixed berries
- 1 (3.5 ounce) package frozen unsweetened acai puree
- ¼ cup fat-free plain strained yogurt
- ¼ cup coconut water
- 1 tablespoon almond butter

- ⅓ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons dried goji berries
- 2 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted
- 1 teaspoon chia seeds
- 1 teaspoon hemp seeds

1. Cut banana in half crosswise; peel half (set aside the remaining unpeeled half). Place the peeled banana half on a freezer-safe plate lined with parchment paper; freeze until solid, about 2 hours.
2. Place the frozen banana, berries, acai puree, yogurt, coconut water, almond butter and cinnamon in a blender. Blend until smooth, 30 to 45 seconds,

stopping to scrape down sides of blender as needed. Peel and slice the reserved banana half.

3. Pour the smoothie into a bowl; top with the banana slices, goji berries, almonds, chia seeds and hemp seeds. Serve immediately.

SERVINGS 1 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 494 **CARBOHYDRATES** 59G
DIETARY FIBER 13G **TOTAL SUGARS** 32G
PROTEIN 18G **TOTAL FAT** 24G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 3MG **VITAMIN A** 3930IU **VITAMIN C** 31MG **VITAMIN E** 7MG **FOLATE** 47MCG **VITAMIN K** 1MCG
SODIUM 83MG **CALCIUM** 257MG **IRON** 4MG
MAGNESIUM 153MG **POTASSIUM** 862MG
ZINC 2MG **OMEGA 3** 1G



Triple-Berry Blended Oats

ACTIVE: 5 min

TOTAL: 8 hr 5 min

Oats blend seamlessly with berries and offer a good dose of fiber in this easy breakfast. For blending, old-fashioned rolled oats are best because of how they soften and soak up the liquid, giving the dish a creamy, luxurious texture.

2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats
 1½ cups oat milk
 1¼ cups fresh or frozen blueberries, divided

1¼ cups fresh or frozen raspberries, divided
 ¾ cup chopped fresh or frozen strawberries, divided
 ¼ cup smooth natural almond butter
 2 tablespoons chia seeds
 2 teaspoons pure maple syrup
 ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
 ⅛ teaspoon salt

1. Place oats, oat milk, 1 cup blueberries, 1 cup raspberries, ½ cup strawberries, almond butter, chia seeds, maple syrup, vanilla and salt in a blender. Process until oats and berries are smooth, about 1

minute. (If using frozen berries, process in the blender until finely chopped, then add the remaining ingredients.)

2. Divide the mixture among 4 (8 ounce) jars; cover and refrigerate for at least 8 hours. Top with the remaining berries before serving.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 JAR
CALORIES 390 **CARBOHYDRATES** 55G
DIETARY FIBER 12G **TOTAL SUGARS** 15G
ADDED SUGARS 5G **PROTEIN** 11G
TOTAL FAT 16G **SATURATED FAT** 2G
CHOLESTEROL 0MG **SODIUM** 119MG
POTASSIUM 491MG





Easy Sheet-Pan Eggs with Mushrooms & Spinach

ACTIVE: 25 min

TOTAL: 45 min

Make these easy sheet-pan eggs the next time you're serving a crowd for breakfast or brunch. Mushrooms add texture and flavor, while spinach adds a pop of color. You can also make these eggs for a meal-prep-friendly breakfast.

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 (10 ounce) package white or cremini mushrooms, sliced
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme

- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1 teaspoon ground pepper, divided
- 1 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- 18 large eggs
- ½ cup whole milk
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 cup shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion; cook, stirring, until lightly golden, 4 to 5 minutes. Add garlic; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add mushrooms, thyme and ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper; continue cooking and stirring until the vegetables are tender, 5 to 7 minutes more. Stir in spinach

and remove from heat.

2. Whisk eggs, milk, mustard and the remaining ¾ teaspoon each salt and pepper in a large bowl. Stir in Cheddar. Pour onto the prepared baking sheet, then sprinkle with the vegetable mixture. Bake, rotating the pan from back to front halfway, until just set, 20 to 25 minutes. Cut into 12 squares and serve.

SERVINGS 12 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SQUARE
CALORIES 204 **CARBOHYDRATES** 5G
DIETARY FIBER 1G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G
PROTEIN 14G **TOTAL FAT** 14G
SATURATED FAT 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 289MG
VITAMIN A 3314IU **VITAMIN C** 2MG
VITAMIN D 64IU **VITAMIN E** 1MG **FOLATE** 75MCG
VITAMIN K 90MCG **SODIUM** 418MG
CALCIUM 156MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 32MG
POTASSIUM 226MG **ZINC** 2MG
VITAMIN B12 1MCG

LUNCHES

with

PUNCH

Embrace the MIND diet's benefits with these lunches that are filling, portable and fun.

Chopped Power Salad with Chicken

ACTIVE: 20 min

TOTAL: 20 min

Feta and pepperoncini add tangy flavor to this salad. The dressing gets made in the same bowl, so the greens absorb all the flavor.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 clove garlic, grated
- ½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground pepper
- 4 cups torn green-leaf lettuce
- 4 cups baby spinach
- 2 cups shredded cooked chicken
- 1 cup halved grape tomatoes

- 1 cup halved and sliced cucumber
- ½ cup slivered red onion
- ⅓ cup sliced pepperoncini
- ⅓ cup crumbled feta cheese
- 2 tablespoons toasted unsalted sunflower seeds

Whisk oil, lemon juice, garlic, oregano, sugar, salt and pepper together in a large bowl. Add lettuce, spinach, chicken, tomatoes, cucumber, onion and pepperoncini; toss to coat. Serve sprinkled with feta and sunflower seeds.

SERVINGS 4 SERVING SIZE ABOUT 2½ CUPS **CALORIES 466 CARBOHYDRATES 14G** **DIETARY FIBER 4G TOTAL SUGARS 7G** **PROTEIN 49G TOTAL FAT 24G SATURATED FAT 5G CHOLESTEROL 130MG** **VITAMIN A 6881IU SODIUM 591MG POTASSIUM 1068MG**





Salmon-Stuffed Avocados

ACTIVE: 15 min

TOTAL: 15 min

Canned salmon is a valuable pantry staple and a practical way to include heart-healthy, omega 3-rich fish in your diet.

- ½ cup nonfat plain strained yogurt
- ½ cup diced celery
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 2 teaspoons mayonnaise

- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon ground pepper
- 2 (5 ounce) cans salmon, drained, flaked, skin and bones removed
- 2 avocados
- Chopped chives for garnish

- 1.** Combine yogurt, celery, parsley, lime juice, mayonnaise, mustard, salt and pepper in a medium bowl; mix well. Add salmon and mix well.
- 2.** Halve the avocados lengthwise and remove the pits. Scoop about 1 tablespoon flesh from each avocado half into a small bowl. Mash

the scooped-out avocado flesh with a fork and stir into the salmon mixture.

- 3.** Fill each avocado half with about ¼ cup of the salmon mixture, mounding it on top. Garnish with chives, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ½ AVOCADO & ¼ CUP SALMON SALAD **CALORIES** 293 **CARBOHYDRATES** 11G **DIETARY FIBER** 7G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G **PROTEIN** 23G **TOTAL FAT** 20G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 61MG **VITAMIN A** 413IU **VITAMIN C** 14MG **FOLATE** 94MCG **SODIUM** 400MG **CALCIUM** 94MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 52MG **POTASSIUM** 807MG





Pickled Beet, Arugula & Herbed Goat Cheese Sandwich

ACTIVE: 10 min

TOTAL: 10 min

This sandwich is peppery with creamy notes from the cheese and sweet with tangy undertones from the beets.

- 2 ounces goat cheese, softened
- 1 tablespoon snipped chives
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill

- 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- Pinch of salt
- Ground pepper to taste
- 2 slices whole-wheat sandwich bread, lightly toasted
- 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts, toasted
- 2 ounces sliced pickled beets
- 1 cup arugula

Mash goat cheese, chives, dill, oil, salt and pepper together in a small bowl. Spread the goat cheese mixture on one side of each toast

slice. Sprinkle walnuts over one slice, then layer on beets and arugula. Top with the second slice of toast, cheese side down, and cut the sandwich in half.

SERVINGS 1 SERVING SIZE 1 SANDWICH
CALORIES 414 CARBOHYDRATES 32G
DIETARY FIBER 6G TOTAL SUGARS 10G
PROTEIN 18G TOTAL FAT 24G
SATURATED FAT 10G CHOLESTEROL 26MG
VITAMIN A 135IU VITAMIN C 7MG
VITAMIN D 9IU VITAMIN E 1MG FOLATE 56MCG
VITAMIN K 34MCG SODIUM 842MG
CALCIUM 176MG IRON 3MG MAGNESIUM 42MG
POTASSIUM 216MG ZINC 1MG

Chopped Salad with Sriracha Tofu & Peanut Dressing

ACTIVE: 10 min

TOTAL: 10 min

Prep four days worth of high-protein vegan lunches using just four ingredients from the grocery store. Because this salad mix is hearty, you can dress the bowls up to 24 hours before serving them to allow the flavors to marry.

1 (10 ounce) package kale, Brussels sprout, broccoli and cabbage salad mix

1 (12 ounce) package frozen shelled edamame, thawed

2 (7 ounce) packages Sriracha-flavored baked tofu, cubed
½ cup spicy peanut vinaigrette

1. Divide salad mix among 4 single-serving containers with lids. Top each with ½ cup edamame and one-fourth of the tofu.

2. Transfer 2 tablespoons vinaigrette into each of 4 small lidded

containers and refrigerate for up to 4 days.

3. Seal the salad containers and refrigerate for up to 4 days. Dress with vinaigrette up to 1 day before serving.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1 SALAD CONTAINER & 2 TBSP. DRESSING

CALORIES 332 **CARBOHYDRATES** 26G
DIETARY FIBER 8G **TOTAL SUGARS** 13G
ADDED SUGARS 4G **PROTEIN** 27G **TOTAL FAT** 15G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **VITAMIN A** 2085IU **VITAMIN C** 68MG **FOLATE** 258MCG
SODIUM 236MG **CALCIUM** 0MG **IRON** 4MG
MAGNESIUM 52MG **POTASSIUM** 41MG





Beet, Mandarin & Farro Salad

ACTIVE: 30 min

TOTAL: 1 hr 30 min

Multicolored beets make this farro salad a pretty addition to any table, but if you're short on time, store-bought cooked beets (found in the refrigerated produce section) are just as delicious.

2 pounds small beets, trimmed
1½ cups water
½ cup semi-pearled farro
2 tablespoons red-wine vinegar
½ medium shallot, finely chopped
1½ teaspoons honey
¾ teaspoon Dijon mustard
¾ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
¼ teaspoon salt

6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 cups baby arugula
½ cup rinsed no-salt-added canned chickpeas
3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
3 mandarin oranges, segmented
¼ cup crumbled feta cheese

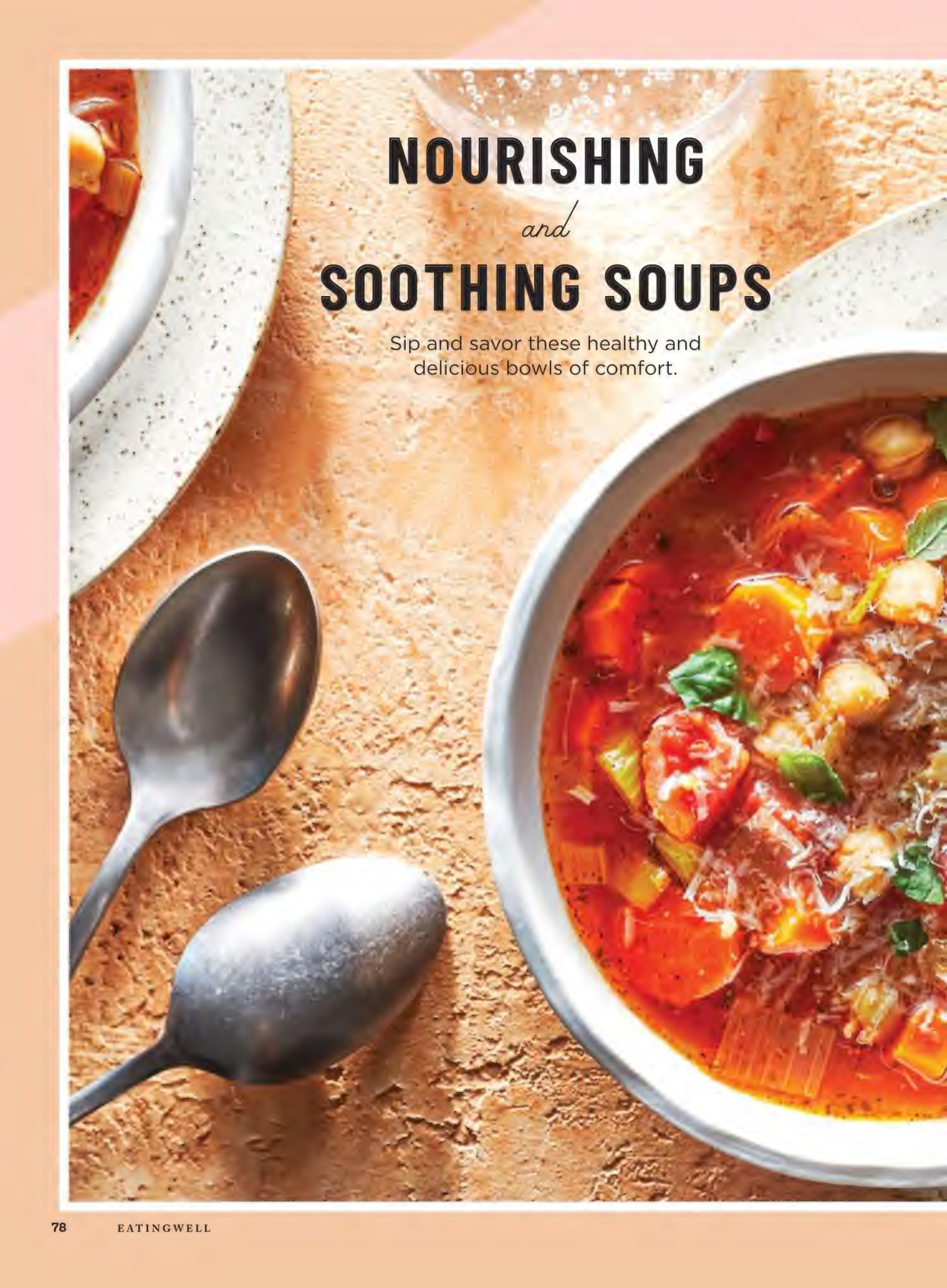
1. Preheat oven to 400°F.

2. Place a large piece of foil on a rimmed baking sheet; place beets in the center of the foil. Gather up the sides of the foil to make a packet. Roast until the beets are very tender when pierced with a knife, 1 to 1¼ hours. When cool enough to handle, slip the skins off the beets. (Alternatively, use 1½ pounds cooked peeled beets.) Cut into 1-inch wedges.

3. Meanwhile, combine water and farro in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer and cook, covered, until the farro is tender and most of the water is absorbed, 25 to 35 minutes. Drain off excess water, if necessary. Spread the farro on a plate and let cool, about 5 minutes.

4. Combine vinegar, shallot, honey, mustard, thyme and salt in a large bowl. Gradually whisk in oil. Add arugula, chickpeas, parsley and the roasted beets and cooled farro and toss to coat. Serve topped with mandarin segments and feta.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 466 **CARBOHYDRATES** 54G
DIETARY FIBER 10G **TOTAL SUGARS** 24G **PROTEIN** 10G **TOTAL FAT** 25G
SATURATED FAT 4G **CHOLESTEROL** 8MG **VITAMIN A** 1269IU **SODIUM** 434MG
POTASSIUM 853MG

A high-angle, close-up photograph of a white ceramic bowl filled with a vibrant red tomato soup. The soup is topped with chunks of yellow squash, green bell peppers, and fresh green basil leaves. A generous amount of shredded white cheese is melted on top. The bowl sits on a light-colored, textured wooden surface. To the left of the bowl, two silver metal spoons are placed diagonally. In the upper left corner, another bowl with soup is partially visible. The overall lighting is warm and natural, creating a cozy and inviting atmosphere.

NOURISHING *and* SOOTHING SOUPS

Sip and savor these healthy and delicious bowls of comfort.



Chickpea Soup

ACTIVE: 50 min

TOTAL: 50 min

This soup gets some heat from crushed red pepper as well as the cayenne in the Italian seasoning blend. If you want to scale back the spice, consider omitting the crushed red pepper. Serve with crusty bread.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1 cup chopped leek
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup chopped celery
- 2 tablespoons unsalted tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon salt-free Italian seasoning (such as Mrs. Dash Italian Medley Seasoning Blend)
- 1 (15 ounce) can no-salt-added chickpeas, rinsed
- 1 (14 ounce) can no-salt-added fire-roasted diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 Parmesan rind (optional)
- 3 cups lower-sodium vegetable broth
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ground pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon crushed red pepper
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan

1. Heat oil in a large Dutch oven or other large pot over medium heat. Add carrots, leek and celery; cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Add tomato paste, garlic and Italian seasoning; cook, stirring constantly, until the mixture is fragrant and the vegetables are coated in the tomato paste, about 1 minute. Stir in chickpeas, tomatoes and their juices, Parmesan rind (if using), broth, pepper, crushed red pepper and salt. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer, uncovered and stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.

2. Remove from heat. Remove and discard the Parmesan rind, if using. Stir in basil. Ladle the soup evenly into 4 bowls; top with Parmesan.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT $1\frac{1}{2}$ CUPS
CALORIES 263 **CARBOHYDRATES** 32G
DIETARY FIBER 7G **TOTAL SUGARS** 8G
PROTEIN 9G **TOTAL FAT** 10G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 5MG **VITAMIN A** 6546IU **SODIUM** 455MG **POTASSIUM** 468MG

Eat the Rainbow Vegetable Soup

ACTIVE: 10 min

TOTAL: 20 min

This vibrant and wholesome soup is packed with a variety of colorful vegetables, including tomatoes, which contain lycopene, an antioxidant that may help reduce inflammation. The base of the soup is prepped ahead of time and stored in separate containers; simply add the broth and heat it in the microwave when you're ready to eat. If you don't want to travel with vegetable broth or don't have access to a microwave, you can use reduced-sodium bouillon and just add hot water.

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup no-salt-added tomato sauce
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups frozen lima beans
- 1 cup matchstick carrots
- 1 cup chopped yellow bell pepper
- 1 cup chopped plum tomatoes
- 1 cup packed chopped spinach
- $2\frac{1}{4}$ cups reduced-sodium vegetable broth
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon Italian seasoning, divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon garlic powder, divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon crushed red pepper, divided
- 3 pinches salt, divided

1. Divide tomato sauce among 3 (1 pint) canning jars or other microwaveable airtight containers. Top each with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup lima beans

and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup each carrots, bell pepper, tomatoes and spinach. Cover and refrigerate for up to 3 days.

2. To prepare 1 jar of soup: Add $\frac{3}{4}$ cup broth to the jar; sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each Italian seasoning, garlic powder and crushed red pepper and a pinch of salt. Microwave, uncovered, on high in 1-minute increments, stirring after each, until the soup is steaming hot and the vegetables are tender, 4 to 5 minutes total. Let cool for 5 minutes before serving.

SERVINGS 3 **SERVING SIZE** $1\frac{1}{3}$ CUPS
CALORIES 182 **CARBOHYDRATES** 36G
DIETARY FIBER 11G **TOTAL SUGARS** 9G
PROTEIN 10G **TOTAL FAT** 1G **SATURATED FAT** 0G **CHOLESTEROL** 0MG **VITAMIN C** 110MG **VITAMIN E** 3MG **SODIUM** 310MG
CALCIUM 77MG **IRON** 4MG **MAGNESIUM** 81MG **POTASSIUM** 1162MG **ZINC** 1MG





20-Minute Creamy Mushroom Soup with Sherry

ACTIVE: 20 min

TOTAL: 20 min

This quick, creamy soup is loaded with earthy wild mushrooms enhanced by the flavor of dry sherry. To keep prep to a minimum, look for packaged sliced wild mushrooms, or slice your own using whatever combination you prefer.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 16 ounces sliced mixed wild mushrooms, such as cremini, oyster and shiitake
- ½ cup chopped shallots
- 2 teaspoons garlic paste
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ⅓ cup dry sherry

- 4 cups reduced-sodium vegetable broth, divided
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground pepper, plus more for garnish
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon sherry vinegar

1. Heat oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms; cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, about 6 minutes. Stir in shallots, garlic paste and thyme; cook, stirring often, until the shallots are translucent and the mixture is fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add sherry; cook, stirring to release any browned bits, until mostly absorbed, 1 to 2 minutes.

2. Reserve ⅓ cup broth in a small measuring cup or bowl. Add the remaining 3⅓ cups broth, salt and

pepper to the pot; bring to a boil over high heat.

3. Whisk cornstarch into the reserved broth until smooth. Pour the mixture into the boiling soup, whisking to incorporate. Cook, stirring constantly, until thickened, 30 to 45 seconds. Stir in cream and vinegar.

4. Transfer 1 cup of soup to a blender; blend until smooth, about 45 seconds (use caution when blending hot liquids). Stir the pureed soup back into the pot. Serve hot; garnish with cracked black pepper, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 224 **CARBOHYDRATES** 23G
DIETARY FIBER 4G **TOTAL SUGARS** 6G
PROTEIN 4G **TOTAL FAT** 14G **SATURATED FAT** 5G **CHOLESTEROL** 17MG **VITAMIN C** 6MG **VITAMIN E** 2MG **SODIUM** 497MG
CALCIUM 46MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 28MG **POTASSIUM** 460MG **ZINC** 1MG



Lemony Chicken & Rice Soup

ACTIVE: 10 min
TOTAL: 20 min

The Greek lemon-chicken soup avgolemono is the inspiration for this 20-minute recipe. Eggs and lemon are tempered into the broth to add richness and creaminess. You can use microwaveable brown rice or a cup of leftover rice.

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup matchstick carrots
- 2 teaspoons garlic paste
- 6 cups unsalted chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon water
- 1 (8.8 ounce) package microwaveable brown rice
- 2 large eggs
- 5 tablespoons lemon juice

- 2 cups shredded cooked chicken breast
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon cracked black pepper

- 1.** Heat oil in a medium Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot over medium heat. Add carrots and garlic paste; cook, stirring constantly, until the garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute.
- 2.** Stir in broth and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium to maintain a simmer and cook, uncovered, until the carrots are crisp-tender, 4 to 5 minutes.
- 3.** Whisk cornstarch and water in a small bowl. Drizzle into the simmering soup; cook, stirring,

until slightly thickened, about 1 minute.

- 4.** Stir in rice, breaking up any clumps. Whisk eggs and lemon juice together in a medium bowl until frothy. Slowly whisk 1 cup of the hot broth into the egg-lemon mixture. Whisking vigorously, gradually add another 1 cup broth.
- 5.** Whisk the egg mixture back into the soup; stir in chicken and salt. Remove from heat and stir until warmed through, about 2 minutes.
- 6.** Ladle the soup into 6 bowls. Top with dill and cracked pepper.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** $1\frac{1}{2}$ CUPS
CALORIES 242 **CARBOHYDRATES** 18G
DIETARY FIBER 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 2G
PROTEIN 20G **TOTAL FAT** 9G **SATURATED FAT** 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 107MG **VITAMIN C** 4MG
VITAMIN E 1MG **SODIUM** 360MG
CALCIUM 37MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 47MG
POTASSIUM 322MG **ZINC** 1MG

Easy Green Tortellini Soup

ACTIVE: 15 min
TOTAL: 20 min

The base of this soup is prepared in advance and stored in separate containers for an easy grab-and-go lunch. Layer the spinach on top of the pesto to create a barrier that will keep the tortellini from getting soggy. When you're ready to eat, add the broth and heat it in the microwave. This recipe has a healthy amount of carbs to support stable blood sugar levels, which translates to stable energy.

4 tablespoons basil pesto
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 cups refrigerated spinach-and-cheese tortellini
1 cup packed chopped spinach
1 cup frozen green peas
½ cup scallions
3 cups unsalted vegetable broth, divided

1. Divide pesto and lemon juice among 4 (1 pint) canning jars or microwaveable airtight containers; stir to combine. Layer each jar with ½ cup tortellini, ¼ cup spinach, ¼ cup peas and 2 tablespoons scallions. Cover and refrigerate for up

to 3 days.

2. To prepare 1 jar of soup: Add ¾ cup broth to the jar. Microwave, uncovered, on high in 1-minute increments, stirring between each, until the soup is steaming hot and the tortellini is tender, 4 to 5 minutes. Let cool for 5 minutes before serving.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** 1½ CUPS
CALORIES 282 **CARBOHYDRATES** 37G
TOTAL SUGARS 5G **DIETARY FIBER** 4G
PROTEIN 12G **TOTAL FAT** 10G **SATURATED FAT** 3G **CHOLESTEROL** 23MG **VITAMIN C** 12MG **VITAMIN E** 2MG **SODIUM** 465MG
CALCIUM 169MG **IRON** 2MG **MAGNESIUM** 42MG **POTASSIUM** 351MG **ZINC** 1MG





A WEEK *of* 5-INGREDIENT DINNERS

Healthy, hearty weeknight dinners don't mean tons of ingredients. These recipes are proof that simple meals can have tons of flavor.



Teriyaki Chicken Stir-Fry

ACTIVE: 20 min

TOTAL: 20 min

Look for a presliced pepper-and-onion mix in the produce section of your supermarket to help save time when making this quick five-ingredient dinner. It also calls for hot cooked brown rice, which is perfect if you have leftovers. If not, look for microwaveable or frozen brown rice to keep prep minimal.

- 2 tablespoons grapeseed oil or other neutral oil, divided
- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed and cut into bite-size pieces
- 4 cups sliced bell peppers and onions
- 1 cup chopped fresh pineapple
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup low-sodium teriyaki sauce
- 2 cups hot cooked brown rice

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken; cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown and cooked through, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a plate.

2. Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in the skillet over medium-high heat. Add peppers and onions; cook, stirring often, until tender-crisp, about 3 minutes. Return the chicken to the pan and stir in pineapple and teriyaki sauce. Cook, stirring often, until the sauce thickens and coats the chicken, about 2 minutes.

3. Divide rice among 4 plates. Top with the chicken and vegetable mixture.

SERVINGS 4 SERVING SIZE 1 CUP CHICKEN MIXTURE & $\frac{1}{2}$ CUP RICE CALORIES 412 CARBOHYDRATES 46G DIETARY FIBER 8G TOTAL SUGARS 12G ADDED SUGARS 3G PROTEIN 28G TOTAL FAT 13G SATURATED FAT 2G CHOLESTEROL 107MG SODIUM 446MG POTASSIUM 447MG

Sheet Pan Caprese Pizza

ACTIVE: 15 min

TOTAL: 25 min

This light and flavorful pizza is ready when the tomatoes are just heated through and the mozzarella is slightly melted. If you want more toppings, it'd be delicious with a few slices of prosciutto. Chef tip: Let your dough come up to room temperature before you stretch it—it will be much easier to work with.

- 1 pound fresh prepared whole-wheat pizza dough
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon kosher salt, divided
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper, divided
- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella, thinly sliced
- 2 cups baby heirloom tomatoes, halved or quartered
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves
- 2 tablespoons balsamic glaze

- 1.** Place a 17x12-inch baking sheet in oven; preheat oven to 450°F. Stretch pizza dough into a 15x10-inch rectangle on a large sheet of parchment paper. Brush dough evenly with oil; sprinkle with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of the salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of the pepper. Transfer to hot baking sheet in preheated oven. Bake until crust starts to brown, about 10 minutes.
- 2.** Remove from oven; top evenly with cheese and tomatoes. Return to oven; bake until cheese just melts, about 2 minutes.
- 3.** Remove from oven. Sprinkle with basil and remaining $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each salt and pepper; drizzle with glaze. Slice into 6 pieces.

SERVINGS 6 SERVING SIZE 1 SLICE
CALORIES 309 CARBOHYDRATES 37G
DIETARY FIBER 3G TOTAL SUGARS 4G
PROTEIN 13G TOTAL FAT 14G SATURATED
FAT 6G SODIUM 584MG



15-Minute Eggs in Vodka Sauce

ACTIVE: 5 min
TOTAL: 15 min

Drawing inspiration from the classic Italian recipe Uova al Purgatorio (Eggs in Purgatory), this easy one-pot meal melds tangy tomato sauce with perfectly poached eggs ideal for sopping up with crispy toasted bread. We like to add a dash of heavy cream to give the sauce some added richness, but you can leave it out if you prefer. If you have it on hand, a garnish of chopped fresh basil or parsley would be a welcome and pretty addition.

1 (14.5 ounce) can no-salt-added diced tomatoes with basil, garlic and oregano, undrained

1 cup jarred vodka sauce

¼ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves

4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese, divided

2 tablespoons heavy cream (optional)

1½ teaspoons refrigerated garlic paste

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper

4 large eggs

Pinch of salt

4 ounces whole-wheat baguette (about 9 inches), cut crosswise into 4 pieces and toasted

1. Stir diced tomatoes, vodka sauce, basil, 2 tablespoons Parmesan, cream (if using), garlic paste and crushed red pepper together in a 12-inch nonstick skillet.

2. Make 4 indentations in the mixture and crack 1 egg into each indentation. Sprinkle the sauce with the remaining 2 tablespoons Parmesan; sprinkle the eggs with salt.

3. Partially cover the skillet; cook over medium heat, undisturbed, until the egg whites are just set and the yolks are still runny, 10 to 12 minutes. Serve with baguette.

SERVINGS 4 SERVING SIZE 1 CUP SAUCE & EGG MIXTURE & 1 OZ. BAGUETTE CALORIES 257 CARBOHYDRATES 25G DIETARY FIBER 2G TOTAL SUGARS 9G ADDED SUGARS 0G PROTEIN 14G TOTAL FAT 11G SATURATED FAT 3G CHOLESTEROL 195MG SODIUM 629MG POTASSIUM 394MG





Spicy Shrimp with Cauliflower Rice

ACTIVE: 20 min

TOTAL: 20 min

This shrimp gets its kick from Cajun seasoning—a zesty blend of paprika, cayenne pepper and garlic powder. Refrigerated cauliflower rice helps cut down on prep time, but if you can spare a few extra minutes, it's easy to make your own: Pulse 1 pound fresh cauliflower florets in a food processor until chopped into rice-size pieces.

- 1 bunch scallions
- 1½ pounds large peeled, deveined raw shrimp, tail on (31 to 40 count)
- 2 tablespoons salt-free Cajun seasoning plus 1 teaspoon, divided
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- ¼ teaspoon salt

1 (16 ounce) package refrigerated riced cauliflower

1. Finely chop dark green scallion tops to yield ½ cup; transfer to a small bowl. Finely chop light green and white scallion bottoms to yield 1½ cups; reserve ½ cup and transfer 1 cup to a large bowl.
2. Add shrimp and 2 tablespoons Cajun seasoning to the large bowl with the 1 cup chopped scallions; toss to coat.
3. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add half of the seasoned shrimp; cook, undisturbed, until opaque around the edges and almost cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes. Reduce heat to medium; flip shrimp. Cook, undisturbed, until cooked through, about 1 minute. Transfer to a large bowl. Do not wipe the pan. Repeat with 1 tablespoon butter and the remaining

shrimp. Sprinkle the shrimp with salt and toss to mix.

4. Melt the remaining 3 tablespoons butter in the pan over medium heat. Add the reserved ½ cup chopped scallion bottoms; cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in riced cauliflower and the remaining 1 teaspoon Cajun seasoning. Cook, stirring often, until tender, about 8 minutes.

5. Stir the shrimp into the cauliflower; divide among 6 bowls. Sprinkle with the reserved chopped scallion tops before serving.

SERVINGS 4 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT 2 CUPS SHRIMP & ABOUT ¼ CUP CAULIFLOWER
CALORIES 286 **CARBOHYDRATES** 9G
DIETARY FIBER 3G **TOTAL SUGARS** 3G
PROTEIN 26G **TOTAL FAT** 17G **SATURATED FAT** 9G **CHOLESTEROL** 253MG **VITAMIN A** 1032IU **VITAMIN C** 60MG **VITAMIN D** 3IU
VITAMIN E 3MG **FOLATE** 116MCG **VITAMIN K** 78MCG **SODIUM** 438MG **CALCIUM** 142MG
IRON 1MG **MAGNESIUM** 61MG **POTASSIUM** 614MG **ZINC** 2MG **VITAMIN B12** 2MCG

5-Ingredient Miso-Glazed Salmon

ACTIVE: 10 min

TOTAL: 15 min

This dinner is quick but jam-packed with flavor thanks to red miso, which has a stronger, more distinct flavor than sweet miso does. You can easily double the recipe when serving guests without tacking on additional time. Serve with steamed broccolini and a side of brown rice.

1½ tablespoons red miso
1 tablespoon lime juice, plus
wedges for serving

2 teaspoons lower-sodium soy sauce

1 teaspoon ground pepper

1 teaspoon honey

4 (5 ounce) skin-on salmon fillets, patted dry

¼ cup thinly sliced scallions (optional)

1. Preheat oven to broil with rack about 7 inches from heat source. Line a large rimmed baking sheet with foil; lightly coat the foil with cooking spray.
2. Whisk miso, lime juice, soy sauce, pepper and honey together in a small bowl. Place fillets on

the prepared baking sheet. Spoon the miso mixture evenly on top of each fillet.

3. Broil the fillets until they flake easily with a fork, 5 to 7 minutes. Sprinkle with scallions, if desired. Serve with lime wedges, if desired.

SERVINGS 4 SERVING SIZE 1 FILLET
CALORIES 223 CARBOHYDRATES 4G
DIETARY FIBER 1G TOTAL SUGARS 2G
ADDED SUGARS 1G PROTEIN 29G TOTAL
FAT 9G SATURATED FAT 1G CHOLESTEROL
78MG VITAMIN A 124IU VITAMIN C 2MG
FOLATE 40MCG VITAMIN K 14MCG
SODIUM 437MG CALCIUM 25MG IRON 1MG
MAGNESIUM 44MG POTASSIUM 725MG
ZINC 1MG VITAMIN B12 5MCG OMEGA 3 3G







ENJOY

some

SNACKS

The MIND diet can be easy
to stick to with these
fun and tasty bites.

Whipped Feta with Cranberries & Walnuts

ACTIVE: 20 min

TOTAL: 25 min

Walnuts provide a nice crunchiness, but you could easily swap in another nut, such as pecans or pistachios. If you have leftover cranberry sauce, try a dollop in some yogurt or oatmeal for an easy breakfast.

- 4 ounces crusty whole-wheat baguette, thinly sliced on the bias
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 (6 ounce) package feta cheese in brine, drained and crumbled (1½ cups)
- ½ cup reduced-fat cream cheese
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large clove garlic
- ¼ cup canned whole-berry cranberry sauce
- 2 teaspoons cold water
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts, toasted
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 teaspoon fresh rosemary leaves
- Flaky sea salt (optional)
- Freshly ground black pepper (optional)

- 1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Brush both sides of baguette slices with melted butter; place in a single layer on a large rimmed baking sheet. Bake, flipping halfway, until golden brown and crispy, 10 to 12 minutes.
- 2.** Meanwhile, add feta, cream cheese, oil and garlic to a food processor; process until a smooth whipped dip forms, 2 to 4 minutes, stopping to scrape down sides as needed. Transfer to a serving bowl.
- 3.** Whisk cranberry sauce and water together in a small bowl until smooth; spoon over the feta. Sprinkle with walnuts, drizzle with honey and sprinkle with rosemary. Season with salt and pepper, if desired. Serve with the crostini.

SERVING SIZE ABOUT 3 TBSP. DIP & 3 CROSTINI **CALORIES** 194 **CARBOHYDRATES** 14G **DIETARY FIBER** 1G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G **ADDED SUGARS** 2G **PROTEIN** 6G **TOTAL FAT** 12G **SATURATED FAT** 6G **CHOLESTEROL** 26MG **SODIUM** 303MG **POTASSIUM** 20MG

Edamame Hummus

ACTIVE: 10 min

TOTAL: 10 min

In only 10 minutes, you can whip up a batch of this light and refreshing edamame hummus that's better than store-bought brands. If you're not a cilantro fan, substitute flat-leaf parsley or celery leaves.

- 1½ cups frozen shelled edamame, thawed, plus more for garnish
- ¼ cup loosely packed fresh cilantro leaves
- 1 large garlic clove, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup tahini
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice

- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ¼ cup water
- Cracked pepper for garnish

1. Add edamame, cilantro, garlic, tahini, lemon juice, salt, coriander and water to a food processor. Process until combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed. Add more water, if desired, to make a looser dip.

2. Transfer to a bowl and garnish with additional edamame and cracked black pepper, if desired.

SERVINGS 6 **SERVING SIZE** ABOUT ¼ CUP
CALORIES 94 **CARBOHYDRATES** 5G
DIETARY FIBER 2G **TOTAL SUGARS** 1G
PROTEIN 5G **TOTAL FAT** 7G **SATURATED FAT** 1G
VITAMIN A 52IU **SODIUM** 166MG
POTASSIUM 199MG





Snickerdoodle Almonds

ACTIVE: 10 min

TOTAL: 1 hr 30 min

Tossing the almonds in frothy egg whites helps the sweet and savory seasoning adhere to them. They make an great appetizer for entertaining or a quick afternoon snack.

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 large egg white
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 pound raw whole almonds

- 1.** Preheat oven to 275°F. Coat a large rimmed baking sheet with cooking spray.
- 2.** Whisk sugar, cinnamon and salt together in a large bowl. Place egg white and vanilla in a medium bowl and whisk until foamy. Add almonds to the egg-white mixture and stir to coat. Add the almonds to the sugar mixture and stir to coat well.
- 3.** Spread the coated almonds evenly on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 30 minutes. Stir, reduce the oven temperature to 200°F and bake until the almonds are dry and golden, about 30 minutes more. Let cool to room temperature before serving or storing.

SERVINGS 12 **SERVING SIZE** 1/4 CUP
CALORIES 248 **CARBOHYDRATES** 14G
DIETARY FIBER 5G **TOTAL SUGARS** 7G
PROTEIN 9G **TOTAL FAT** 19G **SATURATED**
FAT 2G **CHOLESTEROL** 16MG **VITAMIN C**
0MG **VITAMIN E** 10MG **SODIUM** 95MG
CALCIUM 106MG **IRON** 1MG **MAGNESIUM**
103MG **POTASSIUM** 284MG **ZINC** 1MG



High-Protein Lemon-Blueberry Energy Balls

ACTIVE: 15 min
TOTAL: 35 min

These sweet and refreshing energy balls pack protein from almonds, almond butter and hemp seeds. Enjoy this easy snack before or after a workout or as a nice midday pick-me-up at work. The finishing glaze adds a tangy sweetness, but you can leave it off if you prefer a little less sugar.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup old-fashioned rolled oats
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsweetened dried blueberries plus 2 teaspoons, divided
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsalted almond butter

4 pitted Medjool dates
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sliced almonds
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup hemp seeds
2½ teaspoons lemon zest
6 tablespoons lemon juice plus $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon, divided
2 teaspoons honey
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

1. Combine oats, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried blueberries, almond butter, dates, almonds, hemp seeds, lemon zest, 6 tablespoons lemon juice, honey and salt in a food processor; process until a thick paste forms, 1 to 2 minutes, stopping to scrape down sides as needed.
2. Line a large rimmed baking

sheet with parchment paper. Using a 1-tablespoon cookie scoop or measuring spoon, scoop 16 rounded portions of the oat mixture onto the prepared baking sheet. Using clean hands, roll each portion into a ball. Refrigerate the balls, uncovered, until cool to the touch, about 20 minutes.

3. Finely chop the remaining 2 teaspoons dried blueberries. Whisk confectioners' sugar and the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon lemon juice in a small bowl until no lumps remain.

SERVINGS 8 SERVING SIZE 2 ENERGY BALLS
CALORIES 251 CARBOHYDRATES 29G
DIETARY FIBER 5G TOTAL SUGARS 16G
ADDED SUGARS 3G PROTEIN 7G TOTAL FAT 13G
SATURATED FAT 1G CHOLESTEROL 0MG SODIUM 74MG POTASSIUM 322MG

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Printed in the USA.

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—Reviewed by dietitian Maria Laura Haddad-Garcia

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